

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY THROUGH INTENTIONAL
HOSPITALITY IN A MULTI-POINT CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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by
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United Theological Seminary, 2018

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The context for this project is The Huntingtown Charge consisting of two churches Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist Churches located in Huntingtown, Maryland. The problem statement for the context is the lack of authentic relationship between the two churches that share the same pastor and are within a seven-mile radius. The hypothesis was, if members of the multi-point charge would work together in ministry, then authentic community would take place. Utilizing a qualitative approach to this project, I employed surveys, small group discussions, and sermons and bible studies to test various aspects of the hypothesis.

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I would also like to offer words of thank you to my Professional Associates Rev. Dr. Rodney T. Smothers and Rev. Dr. Evan D. Young for your encouragement, coaching, and mentorship to me. My gratitude also goes out to my church family Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist Churches (the Huntingtown Charge) for affording me the opportunity to be your pastor. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts and vision on how we can become an “Authentic Community.” This would not have been made possible without your support and love.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Cynthia for her love and support in my ministry endeavors. I would like to thank my children Anaya, Kylie, Amanda and Dominique for their understanding and love during this journey. I want to thank my mother and siblings for their constant support. I could not have done it without you. Most of all I give praise and honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the strength and wherewithal to embark upon and complete this journey.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Alvin Andrew Fleet, Sr. and Mary Henrietta Fleet who always told me that I was never too old to learn. Thanks for your wisdom, love, and encouragement along life's journey. I also want to dedicate this to my uncle Richard O. Fleet, Sr. who continued to shape and teach me many of life's lessons. To my maternal grandmother Mary Frances Porter, I thank God for your strength and perseverance that you instilled in us all. I would also like to thank my former pastor the late Rev. Robert Owen Johnson, Sr. for allowing the youth of Gibbons United Methodist Church to be in ministry and service to not only the Brandywine community, but to the world.

ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEZ	African Methodist Episcopal Zion
CME	Christian Methodist Episcopal (Colored Methodist Episcopal)
FAS	Free African Society
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
UMC	United Methodist Church

Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love

—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

As I have engaged in this Doctor of Ministry project, I realize that those persons and events that have occurred in my life have allowed me to experience “Authentic Community” or what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would call “Beloved Community.” Authentic community has been a part of my life from High School through Wesley Theological Seminary. It was in high school that athletics allowed me to experience community with persons of different races, nationalities and ethnic groups. It was here that we formed bonds that have been kept through my later years in life. At Bowie State College (now University) once again community was an integral part of my learning. While on campus the interaction of persons from different regions and lifestyles were forged to create authentic community.

Entering Wesley Theological Seminary to pursue a Master of Divinity Degree was the most profound way in which “Beloved Community” was practiced. It was at Wesley that my assumptions and values were shaped and challenged. It was there that my sense of community and ministry was enhanced. The environment at Wesley was an all-inclusive environment, meaning that persons from all walks of life helped to form a community. Through these events and experiences, pastoral ministry produced a wealth of resources for those persons within and outside the congregation. It is through our life stories and witness that authentic community is created so that others can experience and have hope in that community.

The events of life will have an enormous impact on the model for ministry because of the love received in the community. The ministry nuances that have evolved are the feelings that occur when persons come together to help the Kingdom of God grow. This kind of ministry is taking place in the present context setting as persons are coming together to make sure that lives are changed within and outside of the four walls of the church.

My context consists of two churches: Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist church, located in Huntingtown, Maryland. This project will take place at Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist Churches in Huntingtown, Maryland located in Calvert County. The problem statement for the context is that there is a lack of authentic relationship between two churches that share the same pastor within a 7-mile radius. Because of the experience as a pastor of a multi-point church, it has become evident that authentic community is not always endemic. The hypothesis or thesis for this project is “If members of the multi-point charge would work together in ministry, then authentic community would take place.”

The definition of “Authentic Community” is a community where real, true, bonafide, valid, and genuine relationships occur to promote growth in each person. “An authentic community is a group of individuals who have developed a deep and significant commitment to each other and to a shared vision and purpose. Members of the community (1) feel that they belong together and believe that they can make a difference in the world by pursuing their shared vision and purpose; (2) communicate with each other openly, honestly, and creatively; (3) organize themselves with total absence of hierarchy and bureaucracy as equal partners in service and in mutual assistance—they

govern themselves by shared stewardship; (4) apply maximum flexibility in their shared work, taking full advantage of their unique and collective potential, knowledge, skills, creativity, and intuition; (5) take responsibility for the continuing development of their individual and collective capabilities; (6) nurture and practice genuine and authentic participation in achieving their common purpose and in creating the common future of their community; and (7) become bonded, knowing, that they can rely on each other, trust, honor, and support each other, share values, aspirations, and hopes, and live by a collectively defined code of ethics.”¹

In this first chapter I introduce the reader to my specific context and explain why the need for authentic community exists. In the second chapter, we examine Psalm 133 as it speaks to the unity of the body. As well as Acts 2:42-47 because it speaks to the foundations of the church and how the early church came together as a community to ensure that everyone in the community were of sacred worth. In chapter three we move into the historical foundations of the project. It is here that we explore the History of Methodism and all those factions that were created because of racial tensions. In chapter four we investigate the theological foundations through the lens of Howard Thurman in his explanation of the Creation Story and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Cost of Discipleship. In chapter five, we look at the role of the pastor and those disciplines that help us to move closer to creating authentic community. It is here that we look at Saul Alinsky and his community organization, Eric Law and his work on multicultural community, and Jim Lockard and his work on Beloved Community. Each one of these persons express the

¹ Bela H. Banathy, *Designing Social Systems in a Changing World* (New York, NY, Plenum Press, 1996) p. 240.

need for community to have shared experiences. In the final chapter, I explain the specifics of a five-week project involving members of the Huntingtown Charge. Based on the previous chapters, I use sermon series and bible studies to teach on creating authentic community, as well as our Community Day event, Pizza with the Pastor to engage our Youth, and a Community Youth event. From these events I will outline five to seven things to take away from my findings and conclude by assessing how the finds relate to our initial hypothesis.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

After reflecting on the context of which I have been assigned to lead, there are some things within the context that God wants to use to bring about healing and reconciliation. The burning concern within the context is the lack of unity that exists between the two churches. As the pastor of this two-point charge in The United Methodist Church, there is disunity and in many cases the lack of hospitality within the congregations that prohibit them from working together to form a unity and be witnesses for the Kingdom of God.

The ministry skills and interests that are brought to this particular project is that of getting persons in the context/congregation to begin to think about working together to form or produce a stronger ministry setting that will not only benefit them but will also benefit the community which surrounds them. The vision for the body of Christ which in this case consists of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist churches living out what the Apostle Paul speaks of in Ephesians chapter 4 about maintaining or keeping the unity that the Spirit gives to us. In verses 1-6 of the 4th chapter of Ephesians, Paul writes these words,

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your

love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. (New Living Translation of the Holy Bible.)

In my five years of serving on the Huntingtown Charge, the Spirit of God is moving on the two congregations in a way that has produced healthy relationships. However, there is the sense that there is much more that can be done to display the love and hospitality that is needed to bring others into the relationship with Jesus Christ and to make the Kingdom of God a place where love and hospitality are at the center and available to everyone. The pastor is skillful in working with all groups in the church to form relationships where everyone begins to see each other's worth and value to the ministry.

In reflecting on the present ministry on the Huntingtown Charge, it is a blessing to be the leader of this group of persons. The Huntingtown Charge consisting of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist churches has had its share of confusion and dysfunction throughout its existence. The most significant problem that had to be dealt with when entering this appointment was the discussion over the two churches becoming single station churches (churches have individual pastors). The experiences gained from having served as pastor of a previous two-point charge helped to make the transition smoother in the current context. The initial response was not that the single station church idea would not happen, but it would take some reconciliation between the two churches to make it happen.

These two congregations are warm, caring, and compassionate people, who have the heart for outreach to the community. The problem is the lack of unity that occurs

within the Charge. Therefore, in the analysis of the context, there is a need to create a culture of love and hospitality within multi-point churches.

Context

These two churches have been on the Huntingtown Charge for many years and are for the most part rural, country, and family-oriented churches. The weaknesses seen within the congregations is that of animosity and the fear of losing their identities if they were to work together in ministry. The two churches are beginning to work more closely with one another and persons are seeing the fruit of their labor. The other concern is that of persons not wanting to worship together on those fifth Sundays or weeknight worship experiences when they take place. Because of the division that took place with the former pastor, there has been a struggle to get persons to come together to make sure that ministry takes place. Because of this division, many times it has spilled over into the lives of our youth and young adults.

The focus and findings contained in the context are that of doing ministry in a unified manner so that there is a connectional ministry setting on the Huntingtown Charge. After reviewing the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, one of the ways in which unity can occur is through small group ministries. There have been some ways in which we have done this, but for the love and hospitality to grow further and more in-depth, intentionality is the way to promote unconditional love and hospitality toward all persons.

There has been a struggle in bringing about the love and unity that would enhance ministry in the community, because of the divisions created amongst the two churches. Even though each church is community oriented and they love those within the community and beyond, there are times when they display an “us” and “them” spirit amongst themselves. The reference that keeps echoing from the persons in the congregations when it comes to knowing or relating to persons in Calvert County is, “they are from down the county, and we are from up the county.” Instead of there being a rich relationship and heritage throughout Calvert County, especially amongst the blacks, it is a thing of economics, societal differences, and a sense that the persons “up the county” are far better than those who are “down the county.” As it relates to the context, there are some persons, not all, that have this type of mentality and that in some instances have caused disunity within the Charge.

The analysis of the context is that there is a need to create an authentic community with intentional hospitality through small group sessions. Even though we are a welcoming church and persons are friendly, there is the need for a more cohesive unit within the charge so that persons who enter our doors or engage in our ministry settings will feel the love and power of Jesus Christ. As a connectional church within the United Methodist denomination, it is imperative that congregations work closely together to help grow the Kingdom of God. The potential that these two churches have through strong leadership and love can come together in unity as one family.

The vision of the ministry context is that of the “authentic community.” When speaking of the “authentic community,” I am not just speaking of persons coming together and doing things together, but I am speaking of persons being real, genuine, and

true to living and acting out what it means to love one another. The “authentic community” that I envision within my context is a place where we unconditionally love each other, and everyone is of sacred worth. In *Search for the Beloved Community*, it states, “The ultimate aim of SCLC is to foster and create the ‘beloved community’ in America where brotherhood is a reality...SCLC works for integration. Our ultimate goal is genuine intergroup and interpersonal living—integration. As this description indicates, King conceived the Beloved Community in terms of an integrated society wherein unity would be an actuality in every aspect of social life.”¹

As we operate in the reality of “Authentic Community” within the context that I am presently working in, there is an understanding that for things to turn around, it will not happen overnight or automatically. To create authentic community through intentional hospitality in a multi-point church will require a change in attitude and heart. “But King did not believe that the transition from desegregation would be inevitable or automatic. Whereas desegregation can be accomplished by laws, integration will require a change in attitudes, the loving acceptance of individuals and groups. Integration, as King understood it, involves personal and social relationships that are created by love.”²

The burning concern within the context is the reality of creating an authentic community that will not only enhance and grow the Kingdom of God within the church but will create a loving and hospitable atmosphere that goes beyond the four walls of the building. Even though these are two churches, the common thread that binds them together is their connection to The United Methodist Church, and their blood kinship that

¹ Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 130.

² Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community*, 130-131

permeates throughout the congregations and community. “As the emphasis upon interrelatedness suggests, King’s conception of the Beloved Community assumed a theme mentioned throughout these pages, the social nature of human existence. The phrase King used to express this theme was “the solidarity of human family.” Everyone who is even slightly acquainted with King’s writings and speeches is familiar with the words, ‘We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.’”³

Ministry Journey

While reflecting upon the educational experiences that have shaped the ministry, there was a lot of love, teamwork, and relationship building that took place. In high school, the athletic community was where “authentic” or “Beloved Community” formed. While on the baseball and basketball teams, “beloved community” was experienced in the sense that we were persons of all races, colors, sizes, and ethnic backgrounds. It was in this community that we learned to love each other and help each other with any problems or situations that arose. The relationships formed over thirty years ago are still in existence to this day. Upon entering college, once again authentic community was encountered, a community filled with love and respect. It was at Bowie State College (now University) that relationships with persons from not just differing backgrounds but from different parts of the world developed. Even though we were all black or of African descent, we formed a community that showed the love of “beloved community.”

³ Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community*, 131.

As stated in the Introduction, my seminary education at Wesley Theological Seminary was an inclusive environment, meaning that persons from all walks of life helped to form a community. The training received from High School to college through seminary has been the preparation needed for ministry and service to the people. Because of relationships with such diverse people, sharing in “Beloved Community” was possible.

Throughout this journey called life, there have been failures to endure, and some different directions are taken to get to the point of graduating. An internship at the Pentagon provided the necessary tools needed to do the job as a Computer Specialist. While employed at the Department of Defense part of my job was to present in front of high ranking officials. I lacked the confidence to perform this duty. Being able to speak in front of high ranking officials helped me to overcome this fear and prepared me for the craft of preaching. It was also at the Department of Defense where interaction with various people shaped and equipped ministry in a community setting.

When it comes to pastoral ministry, the events in life have proved themselves to be a wealth of resources for those persons within and outside of the congregation. As a witness of Jesus Christ, our life story is essential to creating an authentic community so that others can experience; then there is hope for them. Also, in pastoral ministry, the task is to bring persons together who are at odds with each other for the betterment of the Kingdom of God. Through ministry to persons in the community and the church, people are looking for “life,” and we are here to extend “life” to those that stand in need of the life-giving love of Jesus Christ. While serving in Prison Ministry at Gibbons United Methodist, valuable insight and knowledge was gained on how to treat people locked out

of society, but never the grace of God. Each time we entered the prison, there was the realization of being in a spiritual prison, and it took the blood of Jesus to deliver and set us free. The most significant strength in ministry is that of preaching and teaching.

It was at Gibbons United Methodist Church in Brandywine, Maryland, the church of my youth and young adult years, where “Beloved Community” took root as we grew as the family of God and learned the value of life and how to make contributions to the life of the community. While receiving nurturing at Gibbons the Spirit of God was present, but the first understanding of who God was and is came from family. The family has been the cornerstone of faith, and through faith, the family has grown closer to one another, and we continue to have each other’s back when hard times and tragedy come our way. The one thing that has kept us together is the power of prayer. As a man, growing in faith has helped, especially when it comes to dealing with certain situations. The events of life have afforded ministry opportunities to relate to others that are going through the same or similar situations. Being able to relate to persons who are dealing with kidney problems is one way in which ministry has helped others to be at ease. Having gone through dialysis twice and having two kidney transplants has been powerful ministry moments.

The events of life will have an enormous impact on the model for ministry because of the love received in the community. The ministry nuances that have evolved are the feelings that occur when persons are coming together to help the Kingdom of God grow. This kind of ministry is taking place in the present context setting as persons are coming together to make sure that lives are changed in the four walls and beyond.

Ministry is the place where the love of God is for everyone, and no one is outside of that love. The ministry challenges are 1) not all persons find themselves loving the way in which Christ loved us, and 2) there is a lack of authentic community. So, the meaning of ministry for me is to develop a model where we enact the beloved community as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned it.

The model of ministry developed is one where love is at the center, and all persons live out the love of Christ. Through experiences in life and for the persons that have impacted my life, the love of God has always been present. From the moment of my baptism at three days old, the grace and the love of God has been evident. Because of God's grace, the ministry context known as the Huntingtown Charge is a place where persons who would not typically have a seat at the table are welcome. The proposed model is one where the worship atmosphere, small group atmosphere, and the community atmosphere represents the Kingdom of God. The place where this can begin to take place is in the ministry context known as the Huntingtown Charge. The two congregations are family churches, and the reality is that all of them, for the most part, are related, but there is a divide amongst the congregants. It is not only evident within the two churches, but it is evident in the individual churches themselves. Moreover, for them to act out the Authentic Community, there must be an atmosphere of intentional hospitality present.

The impact of this model on the ministry and other ministries are that of unity and love. This model, when done in the right way and lived out amongst the people using it, should create an authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge. The vision of the two congregations to come together, enhancing the Kingdom of God by loving one another. As others enter this ministry, the prayer and hope are that they will see the love of Jesus

Christ and will join in the Authentic Community. The use of this model will help other faith communities see what it looks like to be in an Authentic Community.

Synergy

The way the context and spiritual journey come together to form the proposed Doctor of Ministry project is by creating authentic community through intentional hospitality in a multi-point church. The experiences drawn from in approaching this project come from the first pastoral appointment at Mt. Zion-Warren UMC (now West Montgomery UMC). It was at this appointment where division, hurt, and pain came as the result of a merger between Mt. Zion and Warren UMC's. Because of the merger, many persons were broken and hurt when the church that they had known for so long could no longer afford ministry as they had known it. Persons from the merger fought hard to maintain the Warren Church, and they raised the necessary funds to make the Warren Church a historic site in Montgomery County.

Upon arriving as pastor in 2002, there was still much resentment and pain that lingered from the merger. Once a year the persons of Warren would hold an Annual Homecoming event as a way of maintaining the historic site. As the new pastor, this opportunity presented itself in a way that honored the past but moved us forward in the future. It was in this appointment that I learned about the gift of listening to what the congregates were saying and to make sure that they had a voice in order to provide a solution to improve the life of the congregation. In listening to the cry of the people, the voice of those persons who felt left out seemingly had their voices heard and were seen as persons of value and worth.

The motto of the church was, “A Church Where Everybody is God’s Somebody,”

We began to make sure that persons who were there with the merger and those who would return from a long absence, or those who were new to the community became a part of the community. This experience was also used to bear fruit in 2009 when my second pastoral appointment was to the West Montgomery Charge which consisted of (Mt. Zion-Warren and St. Mark’s UMC). Once again, the “gift of listening” was used in this new formed two-point charge to bring healing to the St. Mark’s Church that had been devastated by a merger that had not been so favorable to them. With the Lord’s help, we began to move this congregation toward a ministry of healing and wholeness and to make sure that they were a part of the “Beloved Community.” Early in the Charge, we established that we would worship together on the first and fifth Sunday’s alternating the worship sites. We also came together and had joint Bible Study with plenty of food and fellowship. Many of the choirs came together to help the St. Mark’s church to experience vital and vibrant worship.

In our quest to build the “Beloved Community” while on the West Montgomery Charge, we went to “The Church of the Month.” This concept was implemented to integrate the worship services and other ministries in the life of the community. The “Church of the Month.” was used to form a community, where the church hosting for the month would hold all activities for that month. The concept was to alternate worship sites each month to promote growth and unity amongst those on the charge. The concept of the “Church of the Month” brought healing to the congregations, and it began a unified ministry on that charge.

The skills that I possessed was also used to help merge a struggling congregation with the Mt. Zion-Warren congregation so that the legacy and the heritage of the Elijah congregation might continue. The experience gained in the previous appointment had proven to be valuable in the current appointment. Some of the concepts or ministry ideas used in the previous appointment are now a part of the current ministry setting. We worship together on Fifth Sundays as a charge, alternating our worship sites, and we use persons from both congregations to participate in the worship experience. The other thing that has happened is that we have two Bible Studies, but they are not mutually exclusive to the individual churches. There is a noon Bible Study that usually has those persons who are retired from both congregations attending, whereas the seven o'clock Bible Study is for those who work during the day.

Presently, both churches feed persons in the community hot meals at least twice a month. This ministry is called the "When I Was" ministry taken from Matthew 25 and the "From the Heart Ministry." This ministry formed from a sermon preached entitled "Don't Just Stand There, Do Something." We are presently serving an average of 60-70 persons a month. We are also involved with our local school as we provide backpacks and other supplies for those in need during the school year.

The general nature and content of the proposed project are to "Create Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church." The project will use small groups such as the Youth Ministry and Bible Study. With the use of the skills and interests in ministry, the plan is to bring the two Youth Ministries together as a sign of what "Authentic Community" looks like. The way in which the Youth Ministries will

enact “Authentic Community,” is through various activities such as monthly meetings, outreach ministries, and our ROCK Retreat held each year in Ocean City Maryland.

As this project unfolds, the only way in which we can make this happen is through the “agape” love of Jesus Christ. For a community to be an authentic community, we have to display the awesome love of Jesus Christ. If we are to be the “Authentic Community,” we must have Christian love. “The third major theological source King’s conception of the Beloved Community was Christian love (agape). King defined agape as ‘redeeming goodwill for all men...It is the love of God operating in the human heart.’ Agape creates genuine personal relations between people, making them neighbors and friends. In other words, as King interpreted agape, it is linked with his conception of community. Love is a community creating force; it is the only force that can bring community into existence because its inherent unselfishness leads to cooperation instead of competition and conflict.”⁴

The learnings through this Doctor of Ministry is that the known as the Huntingtown Charge will enact “Authentic Community” in which the unconditional love of Jesus Christ is at the forefront of every ministry. The project seeks to create authentic community through intentional hospitality that will mirror what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. calls the “Beloved Community.” This project will seek to help persons reconcile their differences and understand that as a multi-point charge the ultimate goal is to live as one community, sharing the love of Christ with all. Through this endeavor, change or unity will not be automatic, but it will be a challenge as we strive for a life lived in “Authentic Community.” *Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality* will not

⁴ Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community*, 144.

only benefit the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, but other multi-point church sites.

Through this Doctor of Ministry project, the gift of listening and discerning the context and the situation at hand will be a tremendous benefit to the ministry. The skills of bringing persons together and cultivating a community of love and hospitality will help persons to live out and enact the “Authentic Community.” In his book *The Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation*, Bishop Robert Schnase says that “Churches that practice Radical Hospitality sense a calling and responsibilities to pray, plan, and work to invite others and to help them feel welcome and to support them in their faith journeys. Out of genuine love for Christ and for others, their members, staff and pastors take the initiative to invite, welcome, include, and support newcomers and help them grow in faith as they become part of the body of Christ.”⁵

In this Doctor of Ministry project, we want to do something that is drastically different from what is taking place in our ministry context. In this project, we want to demonstrate the “Radical” love and hospitality of Jesus Christ; a love and hospitality that flows from the lives of the congregation and into the lives of those who may experience an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. “Radical” means drastically different from ordinary practices, outside of the norm,” and so it provokes practices that exceed expectations, that go the second mile, that take welcoming the stranger to the max.”⁶

⁵ Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation: Radical Hospitality*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 9.

⁶ Schnase, *Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation*., 17.

Conclusion

The statement or theme of this project is “Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church.” The need within the context is to bring persons together in unity and love so that the Kingdom of God is lived out. When we create authentic community through intentional hospitality, we remind persons that authentic community began with Jesus Christ. The project will help congregations know and understand their most significant contributions to the body of Christ. It is through this project that unity is lived out on the Huntingtown Charge, and to ensure that authentic community is lived out in the name of Jesus Christ.

The project can resource different ministry sites, especially those sites with multi-point churches or cooperative parishes that seek to live in the authentic community. Here are some ways in which we can live out the purpose and plan of God in our lives. First, we would look at the needs of the people in the context or congregation and understand that all of us stand in need of the love of God and that we are of great value in the eyes of God. Secondly, we need to know we are not alone in this process and that when we face life’s difficulties, the community surrounds us with God’s love and grace. Thirdly, we need an authentic community that is intentional through hospitality and seeks to offer hope and peace that will sustain us in our most difficult times. The fourth thing, as we create authentic community through intentional hospitality, we must know and understand that the only way we can serve and love one each other is to be willing to listen and learn from those around us. The fifth aspect to creating authentic community through intentional hospitality is to help people understand that life is worth living and it is not about what we can get out of it, but what we can give to it. The sixth element to

building a community of love and hospitality to make sure that people have a purpose and they are invited into the “Authentic Community” despite their race, status, or socio-economic situation.

A part of creating authentic community through intentional hospitality is not about settling or being satisfied with the status quo but challenging the injustices and discriminations that prevent us from living in the authentic community. Through the gifts of God, the plan is to create an authentic community through intentional hospitality where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Beloved Community” is lived out. “Radical hospitality describes churches that strive without ceasing to exceed expectations to accommodate and include others. A congregation marked by such hospitality adopts an invitational posture that changes everything it does.”⁷

“Congregations must be authentic in what they say and do. You must. It is not a choice. It is not an ideal to strive for. It is an action that you must make up your mind to live into. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Walk equals talk. Word matches deed. If you say you love, you have to love everyone—yes, everyone—yes, even them! This is hard work. This is heart work. Before the church attempts to be in ministry with anybody other than itself, it must work on who it is and how it acts. Authenticity is one package. It is one image. Authenticity is a lifestyle, not a momentary glimpse of vulnerabilities.”⁸

⁷ Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community*, 21.

⁸ F. Douglas Powe and Jasmine Rose Smothers, *Not Safe for Church: Ten Commandments for Reaching New Generations*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2015) 19.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

After reflecting on the ministry context known as the Huntingtown Charge, there are some things within the context that God wants to use to bring about healing and reconciliation. The burning concern within the context is the lack of unity that exists between the two churches with the same pastor within a five to seven-mile radius. As the pastor of this two-point charge in The United Methodist Church, there is disunity and in many cases the lack of hospitality within the congregations that prohibit them from working together to form a more cohesive unit that witnesses for the Kingdom of God.

The vision for Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist churches is to live out what the Apostle Paul speaks of in Ephesians chapter 4 about maintaining or keeping the unity that the Spirit gives to us.

Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling, for God has called you. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. (Eph. 4:1-6)

The two biblical passages that are being used to state the argument and give guidance along this journey toward bringing intentional hospitality to the current context

comes from the Old Testament reading of Psalm 133 and the New Testament Acts 2:42-47. The reasons for choosing these two passages of scripture are 1) the Old Testament speaks of the unity of the body, and 2) the New Testament speaks to the foundations of the church. The argument is the fact that the Spirit of God is moving on the two congregations in a way that has produced healthy relationships. However, the sense is that there is much more that can be done to display the love and hospitality that is needed to bring others into relationship with Jesus Christ and to make for the Kingdom of God where love and hospitality are at the center of life. The problem is that there is a lack of community in many instances that occur within the Charge.

Community means “common unity” among persons who live and work, socialize together to make the Kingdom of God and the world a better place. “Community is integrative. By its very nature, the authentic community includes persons of different races, sexes, ages, religions, cultures, viewpoints, lifestyles, and stages of development by integrating them into the whole that is greater more actualized and dynamic than the sum of its parts.”¹

“The word unity means the state of being one, singleness, absence of diversity, concord, harmony; accord; uniformity; as a unity of sentiment. The Scriptures exhort children of God to live together in unity.”² The goal of this project is to bring unity to the context so that oneness and singleness of mind, body, and spirit may help to bring further growth to the Kingdom of God. The Old Testament passage from Psalm 133 speaks to the unity of the body. The author of this particular Psalm is David. “The main theme of

¹ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press 2005.) p.216.

² The Laymens Bible Encyclopedia. Nashville, Tennessee, 1964. The Southwestern Company.

the psalm is the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. The psalmist here uses family imagery to evoke the joy and blessedness of living together in unity.”³ As we seek to live in unity on the Huntingtown Charge, authentic community must be intentional to the point that everyone is included at the table of God’s love. This Psalm speaks of the church and those persons who comprise of the church that we must intentionally break down the walls and barriers that separate us from living in the authentic community.

The New Testament passage is from the Book of Acts Chapter 2:42-47. The Book of Acts written by Luke, a friend, and companion of Paul. The date of Acts was written somewhere around A.D. 62. The purpose of this book was for “Luke to assure Theophilus as to “the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed.” Theophilus was probably a Gentile convert to Christianity, and Luke wrote to give him a greater knowledge of Christian origins than he already possessed.”⁴

This pericope speaks to the life and character of the early church and how they came together as a community. As an authentic community in a multi-point charge is lived out, we can only live out that community through the power of the Holy Spirit. This passage from Acts 2 will help to create authentic community as we learn and live the way in which the early church lived. There are several elements contained in this passage of scripture that will move us to a place of authenticity and intentional hospitality. The breaking of bread together, times of prayer and fellowship, and learning God’s Word together will begin to break the lack of unity and community that exists.

³ C. Anthony Hunt, *Keep Looking Up: Sermons on the Psalms* p. 35.

⁴ The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Edited by Everett F. Harrison. Nashville, Tennessee, Southwestern Company, 1962.

Old Testament

The context of the group is known as the Huntingtown Charge consisting of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist Churches. These two churches have been on a Charge for several years and are for the most part rural/country family-oriented churches. The weaknesses within the congregations is that of animosity and the fear of losing their identities if they were to work together in ministry. We are beginning to work more closely with one another and persons are seeing the fruit of their labor. The other concern is that of persons not wanting to worship together on those fifth Sundays or weeknight worship experiences when they take place. Because of the division that took place with the former pastor, there has been a struggle to get persons to come together to make sure that ministry takes place. This division has many times trickled down to the lives of our youth and young adults.

The race and nationality of the persons that make up the context are predominately African Americans. This group of individuals are upper middle class, and their economic status is that of a mixture of white-collar and blue-collar workers. The ages of the persons in this context are between eight years to ninety-seven years with an average age of fifty-six. The religious affiliation is Christianity, a part of The United Methodist denomination. The cultural assumption of this context is that there seems to be a cohesive unit within the two-point charge. This assumption exists because there are relatives in both churches; they have grown together through community and education, and they have attended worship together for several years.

The issues that present themselves within the context and in our world are similar in nature. Because of the tension between the seemingly “haves” and “have nots,” a lack of unity has occurred in the world and the church. Much like the world, there are times in which the members of these two churches have a “us” and “them” mentality, thus leading to disunity. The issues that present themselves in the news media have to deal with our political system, our law enforcement persons, and the inhumane treatment of humanity.

There seem to be moments in time when the media has created a divisive atmosphere, therefore, leading to unrest and violence. The impact that these issues have on one’s community brings about a sense of disunity and non-trust in racial moments and with law enforcement. Therefore, because of the climate of racial tension and political unrest, the lives of individuals within the community and the church has persons on the proverbial “pins and needles.” Persons have to live in a state of caution, and they are living less boldly. Therefore, the community has become divided.

The Old Testament Passage Psalm 133 speaks to the fact that it is necessary for kindred, family, persons who have a relationship to come together and embrace one another in love and unity. After further looking at this passage, the need for authentic relationship is important to the community. The blessing is like the expensive oil which flows from the leadership, down to those who are considered the least of these or “common” folk.

The translation that has been chosen to describe this passage in more detail comes from the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. Psalm 133 reads as follows:

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountain of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life

forevermore. (Psalm 133 NRSV).

This Psalm attributed to David is a one of the Song of Ascents. “The Song of Ascent is a musical piece sung by pilgrims as they climbed the hill to Jerusalem at the time of festivals such as the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Weeks, and the Passover, which celebrated in the Temple.”⁵ When we look at the literary style of this Psalm, it is in the style of poetry. “This falls into the class of the wisdom psalms. It is not surprising that such a poem was included in the collection of pilgrim psalms since it had relevance to a concern of every head of a family who pilgrimed to Jerusalem. The solidarity of the family was fundamental to Israel’s social and religious structure. It ensured stability and permanence to the family and the preservation of custom and tradition in the community.”⁶

The date and origin of this psalm seem to be uncertain. However, the psalm-like many others of those in the Pilgrim collection is post-exilic. “The postexilic period the is the time following the Babylonian exile of Israel (587-539 B.C.). The period began with the conquering of Babylon by the Persians and Cyrus’s toleration of diverse religions. This moderate and enlightened practice led to the restoration of the Jewish community in Palestine.”⁷

⁵ Paul J. Achtemeier, (Ed.). (1985). *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, Harper’s Collins, New York, NY. 978

⁶ J.R.P. Sclater; Edwin McNeill Poteat; Frank H. Ballard. “The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Exegesis, Commentary,” *Interpreter’s Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955).

⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, (Ed.). (1985). *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, Harper’s Collins, New York, NY. 809.

The social situation is believed to be a characteristic of the Hellenistic times.

“The Hellenist or Grecians, a term found in Acts 6:1 and 9:29, probably denoting Greek-speaking Jewish Christians in the early church in Jerusalem. The Hellenist probably interpreted the Torah-less stringently than did the ‘Hebrews,’ the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church. The presence of these Hellenists may have served as an intermediate point of transition for the Christian movement in its spread into the Greek-speaking Gentile world.”⁸

In reading Psalm 133, the different translations have different words for what the family unit might be. In the New Revised Standard Version, verse 1 states “How very good and pleasant when kindred live together in unity!” The Common English Bible states it this way, “Look at how good and pleasing it is when families live together as one!” The King James Version puts it this way, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” These passages of Scripture remind us that it is a good and pleasant thing when we as families and communities can come together and live out our lives in one accord with each other. The lack of unity and community comes when we refuse to join with each other so that we might dwell or live like one.

The reason why such a community is possible is that the Psalmist lets us know that it is a “good” and “pleasant” thing when we all receive the blessings that God has for us. In our quest to be a community, and not just any type of community, but the authentic community, we must understand that we all come from different walks of life. When we gather as a community, we must gather for worshiping God and living in “common union” with each other. Because of our varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and

⁸ Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. 382.

race, we are different in that aspect of our being. However, the truth about creating authentic community is the fact that God has the power to bring all those differences together to create something “good” and “pleasant.”

“The psalmist pronounces a blessing on those who live together in unity. During the pilgrimages, the Israelites enjoyed an ecumenical experience on their way toward and in Jerusalem. The pilgrims came from many different walks of life, regions, and tribes as they gathered for one purpose; the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem.”⁹ In its original language, verse one in Hebrew means that “brothers live together.” “The word translated as together conveys some quality of harmony in life that warrants the designation very good and pleasant. It may reflect family concerns, national concerns for reunification, or cultic concerns within religious communities.”¹⁰

After careful consideration, there are times when the churches on the Huntingtown Charge tends to be Lone Rangers. In the quest to build an authentic community, the blessing of God is thwarted because of our insular look at life and ministry. When we fixate and focus on the things that we want, we form walls and divisions that lead to the disunity that we find in our world and our churches. In the Huntingtown Charge we are doing ministry that promotes community, but in many cases, we find ourselves “pulling teeth” to make sure that authentic space and relationship is lived out. Dr. C. Anthony Hunt in his sermon entitled “Better Together” writes these words to help us understand community and dwelling together in unity. “One challenge

⁹ Tremper Longman III; David E. Garland, (Ed.). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, 5 vols.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008). 935.

¹⁰ The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Stand Version with Apocrypha. 2003. p.878.

for us in this present age is that we tend to focus more on the things that are different among us, than on our similarities. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the focus and fixation on our differences tend to lead to divisions within the human family.”¹¹

In viewing the context of the Huntingtown Charge, the disconnect seems to be in the fact that each church wants to be an island in and of itself. In the United Methodist Church, we are a part of a connectional system which means that we are a community of believers in Jesus Christ and we are denominationally connected. To create an authentic community, everyone regardless of where they have come from, ought to be on one accord and understand who we are first in Christ, and secondly who we are by our community relationship in our denomination. Authentic community is that place where we intentionally come together to love, worship, respect and build each other up.

Like the other short psalms in this group, this one is the expression of a single thought—the blessing of unity, and that not merely as shown in the family, but in the church-state of the restored Israel. The remembrance of years of scattering among the nations, and of the schism of the Northern tribes, makes the sight of a united Israel the more blessed, even though its numbers are small.

The psalm begins with a “Behold,” as if the poet would summon others to look on the goodly spectacle which, in reality, or imagination, is spread before him. Israel is gathered together, and the sight is good, as securing substantial benefits, and “pleasant,” as being lovely. The original in ver. 1b runs, “That brethren also dwell together.” The “also” suggests that, in addition to the local union, there should be heart harmony, as befits brothers. To speak in modern dialect, the psalmist cares little for external unity, if the spirit of oneness does not animate the corporate whole.¹²

¹¹ C. Anthony Hunt, *Keep Looking Up: Sermons on the Psalms*, p. 33

¹² A. Maclaren, (1903). The Psalms. In W. Robertson Nicoll (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible: Psalms to Isaiah* (Vol. 3, p. 318). Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co.

We must understand that there is a difference in the people of God dwelling together or coming together and the people of God dwelling together in unity. There is a lack of community or unity in our churches and our world because we have merely learned how to get along. However, if we are to create an authentic community, then we have to move beyond just getting along, and we must dwell together in unity. When we dwell together in unity, it removes all the isms and barriers that keep us from being one body. Dwelling in unity causes us to love one another despite the differences that we have. We learn to love because God is love.

“In community, we seek to arrive at a relationship with others where we are not necessarily one, but where we dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1), cognizant always of the realistic balance between being self-concerned and being other-concerned.”¹³ In the authentic community, we are concerned with what we want, as much as, we can make life better for everyone. Our task as authentic community builders are to make sure that we are dwelling or living together in unity.

In verse number two of Psalm 133, the psalmist states that
 “It is like expensive oil poured over the head, running down onto the beard—
 Aaron’s beard! —which extended over the collar of his robes.” (Psalm 133-2
 NRSV.)

In verse 1 the psalmist speaks of unity being among the kindred, family, or brothers and sisters. Unity or community, when lived out authentically, is like expensive oil that is used to anoint and consecrate the family. Authentic community in this sense is “priceless” because everyone is living his or her lives in the way that God expects them to live. As leaders in the church, we must allow our leadership skills and our priestly

¹³ C. Anthony Hunt, *Keep Looking Up: Sermons on the Psalms*, p. 35

roles to flow down to the rest of the congregation. As the anointing of our leadership flows down, it produces an authentic community that worships the name of God with one accord.

“The fellowship of God’s people on earth is an expression of the priesthood of all believers as spoken of in Exodus 19:6, a promise made to Israel and renewed to the church in Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10). The psalmist compares the expression of harmonious unity to sacerdotal oil. The oil prepared for use in the tabernacle was a special, fragrant oil, whose recipe was not to be imitated (cf. Exodus 30:22-33). In addition to being used for the consecration of the Tent of Meeting, only the high priest and the priests could be anointed with oil, associated exclusively with priestly service (cf. Ex 30:30-33).

The specific reference to Aaron should not be limited to him, as the whole priesthood was anointed with oil. Here Aaron is the ‘head’ of the priestly clan. His name is representative of all the priests. Through the priestly institution, the Lord assured his people of forgiveness and blessing (Ex. 29:44-46; Lev. 9:22-24; Num. 6:24-26). At the same time, the allusion back to primitive Israel in the wilderness conjures up the association of the unity of the tribes around the tabernacle and the receiving of the high priestly ministry of Aaron after he had been consecrated by ‘oil’ (Lev. 8:30). The simile further compares the unity of the brotherhood to the plentiful oil, which flows down the head to the beard and to ‘his robes.’¹⁴

When we decide to live together in unity, then the community is granted a blessing and a rare gift. The oil that is described in this verse of Scripture is not just any

¹⁴ Tremper Longman III; David E. Garland, (Ed.). *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008). 936.

oil, but this oil is “precious” or “extravagant.” This oil is not used just for anybody, but the oil is used to anoint the chief priest. After the chief priest has been anointed, the flow of the oil begins to flow to his beard and then to the vestments that he is wearing. When we come together in unity, and we create authentic community, then God pours on us the most extravagant or precious blessing.

In verse three of Psalm 133, there is the comparison with the dew, and there is the blessing that God commands we should have. The New Revised Standard Version states verse three like this;

“It is like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion, For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.” (Psalm 133:3 NRSV).

“The second comparison relates unity among kindred to the dew of Mt. Hermon. This is probably a double comparison. Mt. Zion itself represents the mountain of the far north, and the dew of Mt. Hermon falls on its counterpart, Mt. Zion, the joy of all the earth. The poem closes with a reminder that it was at Mt. Zion that the Lord ordained (commanded) a blessing, which means life forevermore.”¹⁵ In creating authentic community, there must be the understanding that those who are in leadership positions are above those who are not, but we must not get too haughty and think that we are not to be a blessing for everyone else. In other words, Mt. Hermon is in Mt. Zion, but the same dew that helps the vegetation and life to grow on Mt. Hermon is the same dew that flows down to Mt. Zion. Put another way, the anointing that leadership has should be the same anointing that flows down to the congregation so that authentic community takes place.

¹⁵ *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Stand Version with Apocrypha*. 2003. p.878.

The latter part of this psalm speaks of God ordaining a blessing for those who dwell together in unity, and that blessing is life always. When we create authentic community, we position ourselves to receive the blessings of God. Moreover, the ultimate blessing for those of us who love God is to live with God for eternity. “Loving people are a blessed people. They are blessed by God, and therefore, blessed indeed. The blessing which God commands on those who dwell in love or unity is life forevermore; that is the blessing of blessings. Those who dwell in love not only dwell in God but do already dwell in heaven.”¹⁶

The thing we can take from Psalm 133 is that when we dwell together in unity, we receive the blessings of God. When there is a lack of community and chaos surrounds the church community, then the blessings of God are not free to flow in our lives. One thing that is evident in this passage of Scripture is that the blessings run or flow down. In the various translations, words such as “streaming down” and “extended over” or “running down” as referred to in the Common English Bible. In the New Revised Standard Version words, such as “running down” and “falls” are used to speak about the blessings of God.

The thing that holds this text together is how the author helps us to understand the importance of unity in the family. The author not only helps us to understand the importance of unity, but the author lets us know that it is a good and pleasant thing for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity. What seems to be out of place in this passage is the anointing and the dew imagery that occurs in verse two and three. After

¹⁶ Rev. Dr. Leslie F. Church, *The NIV Matthew Henry Commentary*, vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan, 1992), 1:750.

further reading the text and looking at various commentaries, the two verses refer to unity.

The transition that helps us to understand Psalm 133 better is the anointing oil used and the dew that falls from Mt. Hermon to Mt. Zion. It is in these two verses that we come to understand that when we are in the authentic community the blessings of God flow or run down from the leadership to the congregation. It also helps us to see that in the community that is authentic, the flow of blessing is for everyone and not just the leadership. The common cultural ground or social context that the author is counting on the reader to recognize is that the people are on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for worship and this worship is in unity with the three annual feasts; Passover, Feast of Booths, and Feast of Weeks. It was at these feasts that the Israelite community celebrated their heritage—being free and redeemed from Egypt and their encampment around the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

New Testament

The New Testament passage chosen as a part of the thesis is taken from Acts 2:42-47. Acts Chapter 2 began with the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit rested on those who were in the Upper Room. It is here on the Day of Pentecost that the presence of God is made known with visible and audible manifestations. The word “wind” and “spirit” is derived from the Greek word *pneuma* and the Hebrew word *ruakh*. On the Day of Pentecost, we see the beginnings of the community taking shape as the Spirit of God moves on the leaders or apostles, and they begin to speak the languages of those who have gathered in this one place.

Also, in the earlier part of chapter 2 of Acts, Peter delivers the word of God by citing the Prophet Joel as he preaches about repentance and turning to God for deliverance and salvation. In verses, 42-47 of Acts 2, authentic community comes together as those who are present begin to follow the teachings of the Apostles, and subsequently, they begin to live out the community by sharing what they have.

“The Acts of the Apostles is the name given to the second part of a two-volume work traditionally identified as having been written by Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul. Originally the two volumes were not only written together but also circulated together as two parts of one complete writing. During the late first or early second century, however, Luke’s first volume became associated with the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, thereby forming the four gospels, and Luke’s second volume was left to go its way.”¹⁷

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church. This account of scripture written between A.D. 63 and A.D. 70. The setting of the Book of Acts is the connection between the life of Jesus Christ and the life of the Christian church as we know it. It is also a connecting link between the four Gospel and the Epistles of which Paul writes many. The key verse in Acts comes from chapter 1:8;

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NRSV).

In Acts 2:42-47 we learn that a healthy authentic Christian community invites, welcomes, and nurtures people in the love of Christ. The church in Jerusalem had a zeal

¹⁷ A. M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1957), 48.

for worshiping God and because they loved God with everything they had it became contagious among the people. In creating authentic community, we must worship God with everything we have, and make sure that we are intentional in our love for one another so much so that it becomes contagious.

Even though maintaining this authentic community in the first Christian church was not an easy task, it offered the people hope to go further. In verse 42 of Acts 2, the people devoted themselves to doing four characteristics to maintaining an authentic community: (1) Devoting themselves to the apostle's teachings, (2) developing fellowship amongst themselves to the sharing of spiritual communion, (3) sharing of everyday meals, especially, the Lord's Supper, and (4) daily prayer in the Temple, as well as their homes. Because of these characteristics, the community became one and cared for each other.

If we are to create an authentic community where persons are intentional about how they treat each other and live in union with one another, there must be an atmosphere of learning. The first part of our growth together in community is to make sure that we are all learning the Word of God. The persons in Acts 2:42 ensured that they were together in one accord learning the Good News and then practicing what they had learned. Authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge is possible when we devote ourselves to the teachings of Christ and the doctrines of the church.

“The very first evidence Luke mentions of the Spirit's presence in the church is that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. One might perhaps say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day; its teachers were the apostles whom Jesus had appointed, and there were 3,000 pupils in kindergarten! We note that those new

converts were not enjoying a mystical experience which led them to despise their mind or disdain theology. Anti-intellectualism and the fullness of the Spirit are mutually incompatible because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Nor did those early disciples imagine that, because they had received the Spirit, he was the only teacher they needed and they could dispense of human teachers. On the contrary, they sat at the apostles' feet, hungry to receive instruction, and they persevered in it. Moreover, the teaching authority of the apostles, to which they submitted, was authenticated by miracles: many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles (43). The two references to the apostles, in verse 42 (their teaching) and verse 43 (their miracles), can hardly be an accident. Since the teaching of the apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the New Testament, contemporary devotion to the apostles' teaching will mean submission to the authority of the New Testament. A Spirit-filled church is a New Testament church, in the sense that it studies and submits to New Testament instruction. The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God.”¹⁸

As we continue to create authentic community, we must also understand that *koinonia* is important. Authentic community creates an atmosphere of intentional fellowship and love amongst the group. Our ability to be loving towards one another is key to our growing community. In Matthew 22:34-40 the question is asked about what law is the greatest and Jesus responds in this manner;

“34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37 He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a

¹⁸ J. R. W. Stott, (1994). *The message of Acts: The Spirit, the church & the world* (p. 82). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Mt 22:34–40 NRSV).

We must learn to love the Lord our God with all we have and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. A loving church does not discriminate, nor does it exclude persons because of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status. In the early church in Acts, persons gathered from all walks of life, and were included in the community.

They devoted themselves to the fellowship (*koinōnia*). *Koinōnia* (from *koinos*, 'common') bears witness to the common life of the church in two senses. First, it expresses what we share in this together, is God himself, for 'our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ,' and there is 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.' Thus, *koinōnia* is a Trinitarian experience; it is our common share in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, secondly, *koinōnia* also expresses what we share out together, what we give as well as what we receive. *Koinōnia* is the word Paul used for the collection he was organizing among the Greek churches, and *koinonikos* is the Greek word for 'generous.' It is to this that Luke is particularly referring here because he goes on at once to describe the way in which these first Christians shared their possessions with one another: all the believers were together and had everything in common (*koina*). Selling their possessions and goods (probably meaning their real estate and their valuables respectively), they gave to anyone as he had a need (44–45). These are disturbing verses. Do they mean that every Spirit-filled believer and community will follow their example?

Just a few miles east of Jerusalem the Essene leaders of the Qumran community were committed to the common ownership of property. According to its Damascus Rule all members of 'the covenant', wherever they lived, were obliged to 'succour the poor, the needy, and the stranger', but the candidate for initiation into membership of the monastic community accepted a stricter discipline: 'his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation ...; his property shall be merged ...'.⁶¹ This arrangement, comments Geza Vermes, 'bears a close resemblance to the custom adopted by the primitive Church of Jerusalem'.

So, did the early Christians imitate them, and should we do so today? At different times in church history, some have thought so and done so. There is no doubt that Jesus still calls some of his disciples, as he did the rich young ruler, to a life of total, voluntary poverty. Neither Jesus nor his apostles forbade private property to all Christians. Even the sixteenth-century Anabaptists in the so-called ‘radical reformation’, who wanted fellowship and brotherly love to be added to the Reformers’ definition of the church (in terms of word, sacraments, and discipline), and who talked much about Acts 2 and 4 and ‘the community of goods’, recognized that this was not compulsory. The Hutterite Brethren in Moravia seems to have been the only exception, for they did make complete common ownership a condition of membership. However, Menno Simons, the most influential leader of the movement, pointed out that Jerusalem experiment was neither universal nor permanent, and wrote ‘we ... have never taught nor practiced community of goods’.

It is important to note that even in Jerusalem the sharing of property and possessions was voluntary. According to verse 46, they broke bread in their homes. So evidently many still had homes; not all had sold them. It is also noteworthy that the tense of both verbs in verse 45 is imperfect, which indicates that the selling and the giving were occasional, in response to particular needs, not once and for all. Further, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, to which we shall come to see in Acts 5, was not greed or materialism but deceit; it was not that they had retained part of the proceeds of their sale, but that they had done so while pretending to give it all. Peter made this plain when he said to them: ‘Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? Moreover, after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal?’ (5:4).

At the same time, although the selling and the sharing were and are voluntary, and every Christian has to make conscientious decisions before God in this matter, we are all called to generosity, especially towards the poor and needy. Already in the Old Testament, there was a strong tradition of care for the poor, and the Israelites were to give a tenth of their produce to 'the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow.' How can Spirit-filled believers possibly give less? The principle is stated twice in the Acts: they gave to anyone as he had need (45), and 'there were no needy persons among them ... the money was distributed to anyone as he had need' (4:34–35).¹⁹

One of the things that hold true for having an authentic community is worship. The word worship means that we honor and pay reverence to God because God is worth it. Multiple things in worship bring us together as a community, but the two that strengthens us is prayer and Holy Communion or The Lord's Supper. Prayer is our constant and consistent communication with God. "Prayer is the act of petitioning, praising, giving thanks, of confessing to God; it is expressed by several different words in the Old and New Testament. Prayer can be individual or corporate, audible or silent."²⁰ When we engage in consistent communication with God as an authentic community, praying and giving thanks to God for what God is doing amid our ministry, we participate in worship.

The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion is that sacrament where we remember what Christ has done for us. In Holy Communion, we celebrate the love of God freely given to humanity in the life and death of Jesus Christ. In Holy Communion, God invites

¹⁹ Stott, *The message of Acts*, 82-84

²⁰ Paul J. Achtemeier, (Ed.). (1985). *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Harper's Collins, New York, NY. 816

us to commune and be in fellowship with Christ and one another. United Methodists celebrate an “open table” when it comes to Holy Communion. “Open means that all who ‘truly and earnestly repent of their sins, and are in love and charity with their neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, [follow] the commands of God, are invited to the table of the Lord.’”²¹ Prayer is the discipline that brings us into a relationship with God and others, and Holy Communion is the reminder of why we should be in a relationship and authentic community with others.

“They devoted themselves ... to the breaking of bread and prayer (42). That is, their fellowship was expressed not only in caring for each other but in corporate worship too. Moreover, the definite article in both expressions (literally, ‘the breaking of the bread and the prayers’) suggests a reference to the Lord’s Supper on the one hand (although almost certainly at that early stage as part of a larger meal) and prayer services or meetings (rather than Private prayer) on the other.

There are two aspects of the early church’s worship which exemplify its balance. First, it was both formal and informal, for it took place both in the temple courts and in their homes (46), which is an interesting combination. It is perhaps surprising that they continued for a while in the temple, but they did. They did not immediately abandon what might be called the institutional church. I do not believe they still participated in the sacrifices of the temple, for already they had begun to grasp that these had been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ. However, members of the first church attended the prayer services of the temple (cf. 3:1), unless, as has been suggested, they went up to the temple to preach, rather than to pray. At the same time, they supplemented the temple services

²¹ Chester E. Custer, *The United Methodist Primer*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005) 60-61.

with more informal and spontaneous meetings (including the breaking of bread) in their homes. Perhaps we, who get understandably impatient with the inherited structures of the church, can learn a lesson from them. For myself, I believe that the Holy Spirit's way with the institutional church, which we long to see reformed according to the gospel, is more the way of patient reform than of impatient rejection. Moreover, indeed, it is always healthy when the more formal and dignified services of the local church are complemented with the informality and exuberance of home meetings. There is no need to polarize between the structured and the unstructured, the traditional and the spontaneous. The church needs both.

The second example of the balance of the early church's worship is that it was both joyful and reverent. There can be no doubt of their joy, for they are described as having glad and sincere hearts (46), which means 'in exultation [agalliasis] and sincerity of heart.' The NEB unites the two words by translating 'with unaffected joy.' Since God had sent his son into the world and had now sent them his Spirit, they had plenty of reason to be joyful. Besides, 'the fruit of the Spirit is ... joy',⁶⁷ and sometimes a more uninhibited joy than is customary (or even acceptable) within the staid traditions of the historic churches. Every worship service should be a joyful celebration of the mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ. It is right in public worship to be dignified; it is unforgivable to be dull. At the same time, their joy was never irreverent. If joy in God is an authentic work of the Spirit, so is the fear of God. Everyone was filled with awe (43), which seems to include the Christians as well as the non-Christians. God had visited their city. He was in their midst, and they knew it. They bowed down before him in humility and wonder. It is a mistake, therefore, to imagine that in public worship reverence and

rejoicing are mutually exclusive. The combination of joy and awe, as of formality and informality, is a healthy balance in worship.”²²

When an authentic community is created with prayer, holding fast to the teachings of the apostles, having fellowship in the home and the temple, and sharing an ordinary meal with each other something miraculous happens. The next step in having an authentic community is to make sure that persons in the community are accepted. In the early life of the church, everyone was in awe of the coming together and creating community. Because of community, worship was vibrant and vital with the praising of God and persons were at home in the community. As they witnessed to the goodness of God; He added to the community.

As we create an authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge, we must know that we cannot leave out the four elements or characteristics that made the early church successful. We must embrace these characteristics as we try to embrace others as they become a part of the authentic community. Prayer must be the key to moving us to authentic community. Intentional fellowship and hospitality must move us to a place where we are engaging one another, and we genuinely love as Christ loves. We cannot afford to have a selfish mindset, but we must share what we have and remind ourselves that Christ gave himself for us all. We must make sure that we are equipping ourselves with the Word of God so that we might be secure in our inner selves.

“So far, we have considered the study, the fellowship and the worship of the Jerusalem church, for it is to these three things that Luke says the first believers devoted

²² J. R. W. Stott, (1994). *The message of Acts: The Spirit, the church & the world* (pp. 84–86). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

themselves. These are aspects of the interior life of the church; they tell us nothing about its compassionate outreach to the world. Tens of thousands of sermons have been preached on Acts 2:42, which well illustrates the danger of isolating a text from its context. On its own, verse 42 presents a very lopsided picture of the church's life. Verse 47b needs to be added: And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Those first Jerusalem Christians were not so preoccupied with learning, sharing and worshipping, that they forgot about witnessing. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit who creates a missionary church. As Harry Boer expressed it in his challenging book *Pentecost and Missions*, the Acts 'is governed by one dominant, overriding and all-controlling motif. This motif is the expansion of the faith through missionary witness in the power of the Spirit.... Restlessly the Spirit drives the church to witness, and continually churches rise out of the witness. The church is a missionary church.'

From these earliest believers in Jerusalem, we can learn three vital lessons about local church evangelism. First, the Lord himself (that is, Jesus) did it: the Lord added to their number. Doubtless, he did it through the preaching of the apostles, the witness of church members, the impressive love of their common life, and their example as they were praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people (47a). He did it. For he is the head of the church. He alone has the prerogative to admit people into its membership and to bestow salvation from his throne. This is a much-needed emphasis. Many people talk about evangelism today with reprehensible self-confidence and even triumphalism as if they think the evangelization of the world will be the ultimate triumph of human technology. We should harness to the evangelistic task all the technology God has given us, but only in humble dependence on him as the principal evangelist.

Secondly, what Jesus did was two things together: he added to their number those who were being saved (the present participle *sōzomenous* either being timeless or emphasizing that salvation is a progressive experience culminating in final glorification). He did not add them to the church without saving them (no nominal Christianity at the beginning), nor did he save them without adding them to the church (no solitary Christianity either). Salvation and church membership belonged together; they still do. Thirdly, the Lord added people daily. The verb is an imperfect ('kept adding'), and the adverb ('daily') puts the matter beyond question. The early church's evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity. They did not organize quinquennial or decennial missions (missions are fine so long as they are only episodes in an ongoing program). No, just as their worship was daily (46a), so was their witness. Praise and Proclamation were both the natural overflow of hearts full of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as their outreach was continuous, so continuously converts were being added. We need to recover this expectation of steady and uninterrupted church growth.

Looking back over these marks of the first Spirit-filled community, it is evident that they all concerned the church's relationships. First, they were related to the apostles (in submission). They were eager to receive the apostles' instruction. A Spirit-filled church is an apostolic church, a New Testament church, anxious to believe and obey what Jesus and his apostles taught. Secondly, they were related to each other (in love). They persevered in the fellowship, supporting each other and relieving the needs of the poor. A Spirit-filled church is a loving, caring, sharing church. Thirdly, they were related to God (in worship). They worshiped him in the temple and the home, in the Lord's Supper and the prayers, with joy and with reverence. A Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church.

Fourthly, they were related to the world (in outreach). They were engaged in continuous evangelism. No self-centered, self-contained church (absorbed in its parochial affairs) can claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church.

There is no need for us to wait, as the hundred and twenty had to wait, for the Spirit to come. For the Holy Spirit, did come on the Day of Pentecost, and has never left His church. Our responsibility is to humble ourselves before His sovereign authority, to determined not to quench Him, but to allow Him his freedom. For then our churches will again manifest those marks of the Spirit's presence, which many young people are especially looking for, namely biblical teaching, loving fellowship, living worship, and an ongoing, outgoing evangelism."²³

Conclusion

The project will create authentic community through intentional hospitality in the Huntingtown Charge. Once the Huntingtown Charge has created authentic community, the model will help different ministry sites, especially those with multi-point churches or parishes. From the two passages of scripture chosen for the biblical foundation's paper, they are in line with how authentic community can be achieved not only for this project but to enhance the ministry of multi-point charges or multi-point sites. These two passages deal with first the body and leadership and how leadership must create space and place for the community.

In the Huntingtown Charge consisting of Plum Point and Patuxent Churches, the problem is the lack of authentic community or relationship between two churches that share the same pastor. There is the situation where persons will not worship together on our joint Sunday because of the tension and division that has taken place over the years. There is no real support for each other when it comes to providing ministry to the community because there is the notion that one church is better than the other. Ministries that could and should come together such as the Youth Ministry becomes stagnated because of the filtering down of information or dislike for the other. For an authentic community to take place in these two churches, there must be intentional love and hospitality shown to one another.

Psalm 133 reminds us that it is a good and pleasant thing when families, kindred, or community comes together. In our uniting, we find that the blessings of God flow like oil. It is in the authentic community that we experience leadership leading by example, therefore, including everyone that is in the community. Our anointing or flow should be to the point that all persons receive the blessings of God. One of the things I like to say about authentic community or relationships is that if we cannot get along down here on earth, how is it that we can expect to spend eternity with each other in glory. Our love for each other is put on display while we are living, making sure that we are following the commands of God. Our ultimate blessing as a community is to live with God forever, but that cannot happen if we are not willing to be intentional about our relationships with one another.

In the New Testament passage from Acts 2:42-47, the passage speaks of the early church and how the early church adopted the spiritual disciplines to lead others to Christ

and build community. In the ministry context known as the Huntingtown Charge, the vision for the two churches is to create authentic community through intentional hospitality. The way in which we create authentic community is by patterning our lives after the early church in the Book of Acts. As we implement these characteristics, we will begin to see a community that is authentic in its love, praise, and community outreach.

Through careful study of scripture and gaining insight as to how it's application helps to foster authentic community, individuals will be empowered to see ministry and life as God envisions it to be. Along with the application of God's Word, there must be a time of prayer and constant communication with God. The authentic community can be lived out effectively when we come together for a time of prayer not just for ourselves, but for the community within and outside of the church. The authentic community also involves the community sharing what they have with those that are around them. This Acts passage helps us to understand that through the power of the Holy Spirit we are empowered through prayer, study and witness or sharing. Our fellowship one with the other in community emphasizes the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit that unites the different believers into koinonia.

A part of creating an authentic community through intentional hospitality is not about settling or being satisfied with the status quo, but challenging persons and structures to live a life of love the way in which Christ lived, so that others are a part of the community. The goal of creating authentic community through intentional hospitality is to express the command of loving neighbor as oneself and to mirror the "Beloved Community" as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed would come to pass. "Radical

hospitality describes churches that strive without ceasing to exceed expectations to accommodate and include others. A congregation marked by such hospitality adopts an invitational posture that changes everything it does.”²⁴

The Apostle Paul uses the image of the body in his Epistle to the Church at Corinth. He reminds the early church, as he reminds the church today, that we cannot carry out ministry alone. Every function of our natural body is essential to our day to day functioning. Even those parts that are not so noticeable are of value to the body. In creating authentic community, we must understand that the people or persons we think are not valuable to the ministry, are most valuable to the community. We need everyone working together to create a robust and authentic community.

“Synergism is derived from the Greek word ‘synergos’ meaning ‘working together.’ It means that by joining with others, common objectives can be accomplished more effectively. There is strength in numbers when we multiply our efforts through living and working with others.”²⁵

²⁴ Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation: Radical Hospitality*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 21.

²⁵ C. Anthony Hunt, *Keep Looking Up: Sermons on the Psalms* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press, 2016) p. 37.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Growing up in the United Methodist Church, it just seemed as though there were many Methodist churches in our small town of Brandywine. Many of them were multi-point charges such as the one I grew up in Gibbons United Methodist Church. We shared a pastor with two other churches: Asbury and Zion-Wesley; before we went to a two-point charge of Gibbons and Asbury. The most striking thing was that as a predominately black or African American church, we were not the only ones on a multi-point charge. There were white congregations who shared pastors as well.

It is not noted of the racial tension during those times, but there had to be some because of the separation of persons to their community. In reflecting upon the issues of race, Brooks' Methodist Episcopal Church (now Nottingham-Myers United Methodist Church) and Brookfield Methodist Episcopal Church (now Brookfield United Methodist Church) in Southern Maryland were not even five miles apart. Many strides have been made recently as the two churches worship and do ministry together, even the acceptance of African American members has taken place.

As a pastor in Calvert County, Maryland, we face the same problems and situations that occurred earlier in the Methodist church. There are many cases in today's world that blacks and whites do not come together to worship as one or do ministry as

one community under the banner of United Methodism. There are still race issues that face many people in Calvert County, Maryland and strides are being made to eradicate the racism or racial tension that exists. If progress is to happen within the churches, especially the United Methodist churches, persons will have to begin the dialogue. Plum Point United Methodist Church and Emmanuel United Methodist Church are located within a two to three-mile radius, yet there is still tension over race that occurred over 150 years ago. For there to be an authentic community, we have to learn to live, work, and do ministry together.

The history of the Huntingtown Charge consisting of Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist Churches began with two churches that have been on a Charge for many years and are for the most part rural/country family-oriented churches. The Plum Point Church was given by the Parran family to the black congregation in 1878. Initially there were two entrances to the front of this building indicating the segregation of the whites and the blacks. Due to the segregation of blacks and whites, there are two cemeteries, one where whites and one for blacks. "The original "Plum Point Chapel" was built sometime between 1789 and 1810. Not far from the "Chapel" was a small frame building used as a community meeting house. This small framed building served as a schoolhouse for Blacks. By 1867 the congregation was split over slavery, and some members left and formed the Emmanuel Methodist Church. Those left behind worshiped there until 1894 when they found it difficult to continue. The Black congregation, which had been worshipping in the community hall and schoolhouse, were given the first option to buy the property for \$700 on the condition that the graves not be disturbed.”¹

¹ The History of Plum Point Church, www.plumpointumc.org.

The history of Patuxent United Methodist Church reads as follows:

Records indicate that Patuxent Church organized as a worshipping congregation in 1875. The Huntingtown Circuit was in existence during 1868, and this circuit consisted of eight churches. These churches were Brown's Chapel (renamed Young's), Cooper's Chapel, St. John's, Mt. Hope Chapel, Patuxent Chapel, Peter's Chapel, Plum Point Chapel, and St. Edmond's Chapel. The Patuxent congregation purchased two acres of land in 1880 for \$50.00, and a deed was conveyed to John W. Weems, Robert Gray, and James Thomas, trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on April 10, 1880. The church a traditionally African American congregation was formed in 1883 by the Wall, Chase, and Mackall families. The cornerstone for the first church building was laid on June 24, 1883, by the Rev. Daniel Wheeler; assisted by Rev. B.H. Nugent, Pastor. The original Patuxent Church building also became the public school for blacks. The Patuxent Church is said to be to one of the most prominent African American churches in the Calvert County area. The congregation is traditionally African American and worshiped in what seemed to be a one-room sanctuary.²

After looking at the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, historically The United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (formerly known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church) will be reviewed. We will look at the challenges in the community which caused these branches of Zion to separate themselves. These traditional institutions are worth looking at because they offer avenues to building the Kingdom of God through authentic community. However, as we move forward in ministry and further understanding of the history of God's people, the one thing that prohibited the creation of authentic community was the enslavement of other people.

Slavery and race have been the Achilles heel in the United Methodist Church, and we continue to argue over the black vs. the white church, and we realize that there is but one race and that is the human race. The quest for the authentic community has always

² The History of Patuxent United Methodist Church. 100th Anniversary Booklet

been a goal of the black community, as well as the church, but due to racism and discrimination, it has never come to pass. “From the beginning of the nation’s history up to the present day, the black American experience has been characterized by racism a phenomenon that employs race as a proscriptive principle for denying rights and opportunities, that is, a principle of societal exclusion.”³

“Slavery is the institution whereby one person can hold ownership rights over another. In the biblical world, this institution took on forms quite unlike the New World slavery practiced in the West particularly in the 18th and 19th century. This entry consists of three articles that explore slavery in the biblical world. The first focuses upon slave labor in the ANE (particularly Mesopotamia); the second focuses upon the practice of slavery as it is depicted in the OT, and the third focuses upon Greco-Roman practices of slavery and how these are depicted in NT texts.”⁴ Therefore, looking at the historical view of Methodism and all the factions that have caused us not to be an authentic community is critical to our growth.

History of Methodism

The Methodist movement in its early years was formed and founded by John and Charles Wesley and a group of their friends in England. This group was known as the “Holy Club” because there was a method to how they went about devoting their lives to Scripture and the disciplines of the Bible. The vision of the Methodist movement was to

³ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Church*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.) 3-4.

⁴ D. N. Freedman, (Ed.). (1992). *Slavery*. In the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 6, p. 58). New York: Doubleday.

be spontaneous, free from any type of institutional organization, full of energy and aspiration. This type of movement was open to those who had a desire to flee from the wrath of God and become connected to a society that would give them the ability to learn the scriptures methodically.

“In terms of race relations, the Methodist Church was one of the most progressive religious bodies at the end of the eighteenth century. But although Methodist evangelists preached a gospel that emphasized that God was ‘no respecter of persons’ and large numbers of Blacks responded favorably to this message, attempts to apply the Wesleyan teachings of Wesley began to run into opposition when these teachings directly confronted the world of slaves and slave masters.”⁵

After traveling to America’s, Wesley formed a view of slavery and insisted that those persons who are owners of slaves let them go free. He understood that the Gospel was for everyone and persons are created in the image of the Almighty God. As an authentic community, the Methodist movement or Methodist Church in and of itself held to the fact that all persons were of sacred worth and accepted in the body of Christ. Blacks who were a part of that body from the beginning felt at home because of their acceptance of people of God and not just outcasts. “The problem of slavery marked American history almost from the beginning. The Revolution raised troubling questions about keeping slaves while fighting for liberty. Although some denominations were able to avoid the issue because of their regional character, Baptists and Presbyterians, along

⁵ C. Anthony Hunt, *Church Division: Cause and Results...The Slave Question and The Civil War*, (African Heritage Theological Journal, June 2001.) 7.

with Methodists, were caught squarely in the middle. All three in one way or another were split before the Civil War divided the nation.”⁶

“But Wesley furiously attacked slavery. His strategy was consistent with the rest of his ministry: an individual, direct appeal to the conscience of the guilty. In opposing slavery, Wesley directly appealed to the captains of slave ships, the dealers in slaves, and the slave-owners themselves. He was first and foremost an evangelist, and he relied primarily on the methods of evangelism to carry his antislavery message. He saw it as an institution only to satisfy the greed of men. He denied that it was necessary for the economic operation of the colonies. And even if it were, he insisted that prosperity purchased at so great a price was an offense against God. From the initial view in South Carolina until the last letter on his deathbed, Wesley believed that slavery was a deep-rooted evil that must be destroyed. And among other Methodists he created a strong antislavery sentiment and weaved it into the fabric of Wesleyan evangelism.”⁷

As Wesley viewed the community in which he was trying to create, he saw Blacks as human beings, and the institution of slavery was the justice and mercy of God. “The record of the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (in foreign parts) in 1701 points this out. Formed by the Anglican Church, the SPG was one of the first missionary institutions that sought to convert slaves and Native Americans to Christianity. The debate underlying the work of the SPG was not only rooted in whether or not conversion of slaves and native persons was appropriate or necessary. The

⁶ Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.) 185.

⁷ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Wither Thou Goest*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.) 11, 13-14.

conclusion as to this particular aspect of propagation had been addressed by British Royalty in 1660 as Charles II encouraged the evangelization and conversion of slaves in America. The debate was more rooted in who (or what) was being converted—whether slaves and native persons were in-fact persons.”⁸

Even though Wesley attacked and disliked the institution of slavery, the Methodist Church in America struggled with the abolishment of slavery. Even though Blacks were a part of the Methodist Church, they were not a part of the community as we know community to be. Many of the blacks were relegated to the balconies of the church, and many were permitted to sit in worship after they had done those things that were necessary to make the whites comfortable, such as starting the fire before worship. One of the striking things that happened in the church I serve was that the slaves were relegated to the balcony, but even on the main floor of the sanctuary, there was separation. The white men sat in the middle of the sanctuary while the wives and children sat on the right and left side of the church. Likewise, after the whites left Plum Point, the blacks practiced this same thing with the men in the middle and the women on the sides of the sanctuary.

Because of the institution of slavery and the discrimination that blacks faced, many blacks left the Methodist Episcopal Church and formed their denominations, such as happened in 1787 when Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others the Free African Society in Philadelphia. The beginning of the new denominations took place in the following way: there was a rearrangement in seating persons at St. George Church due to

⁸ C. Anthony Hunt, *Church Division: Cause and Results...The Slave Question and The Civil War*, (African Heritage Theological Journal, June 2001.) 5.

over crowdedness. The church agreed to an addition of the church, and many of the blacks put their time, money, and muscle to see this through. Once the addition to the church was completed, the church went back to business as usual, and the blacks were relegated to the balcony or the galley. The lack of authentic community comes into play when a group of persons agrees to help make a situation better for them, but they need blacks to supply workforce and money to get it done. A lack of trust in community results in the community not being authentic. Blacks was made to believe that things would change, but they did not.

“For many of Allen’s racial contemporaries, the order was not without precedent. They were beginning to recognize discriminatory treatment as inevitable in other areas of their lives, and its current appearance in their church life only served to remind them that segregated seating was becoming an integral part of a developing pattern.”⁹ Blacks at this particular point in their Christian journey felt that they were not of any human worth. Therefore, they began to raise the issue of whether or not they should start a new church separate from its white counterparts, just for blacks. Seemingly the contributions of blacks in St. George Church had been overlooked, and they were not the second-class citizens they were perceived to be.

“Such a situation presented itself when the church was re-opened for worship, Allen, and his friends, arriving just after the service had begun, were directed by the sexton to seats in the gallery. The places they occupied were apparently not the ones intended for them, for shortly after prayers had begun, and while everyone was kneeling,

⁹ Carol V.R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and The Emergence of Independent Black Churches 1760-1840*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.) 54.

a trustee approached Absalom Jones and began to pull him off his knees. Jones asked the man to wait until the prayers had ended, but the impatient trustee refused to be put off a moment longer. “No,” “he said, you must get up now, or I will call for aid to force you away.” A second request by Jones was again denied as the white man motioned to another trustee to assist him in pulling the praying Africans from their knees. Just as they were ready to act, the prayer ended, the black group walked out in a body, and according to Allen, ‘they were no more plagued with us in the church.’¹⁰

From this event at St. George Church, the group of blacks that walked out formed the Free African Society out of which the African Methodist Episcopal Church grew. “When officials at St. George MEC pulled blacks off their knees while praying, FAS (Free African Society) members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans. Hence, these members of St. George’s made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group who resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794 Bethel AME was dedicated with Allen as the pastor. To form Bethel’s independence from interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because black Methodism in other middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form the new Wesleyan denomination, the AME (African Methodist Episcopal).”¹¹

¹⁰ George, *Segregated Sabbaths.*, 55.

¹¹ Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., and Susan E. Warrick, *A to Z of Methodism*, (Lanham, Maryland, Scrow Press, 2005.) 7-8.

As Allen was organizing the AME Church, discrimination and racism were rearing its ugly head at the John Street MEC in New York. “The colored people of the City of New York resented caste prejudice, which “forbade their taking the sacrament until white members were served.” This, and the desire for other church privileges denied them, induced them to organize among themselves, which they did in 1796, and in the year 1800 they built a church and called it “Zion.” A contract was made between that body and the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America, that, as they had no ordained ministers of their own race, the Methodist Episcopal Church should provide them. Under this arrangement, “Zion” received the services of preachers of that church for “about twenty years.” In the end, a minister, who had been sent to “Zion Colored Church,” having seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church, the trustees of “Zion” invited him to finish out the year, and, when this was done, the members induced him to ordain as elders three of their brethren, already ordained as deacons.”¹²

James Varick and others withdrew their membership at John Street MEC and organized the AMEZ Church in 1801 as an independent congregation. Because of the discrimination and racism, they refused to deal with the Methodist Episcopal Church. “They desire to sever all ties with the MEC and to decline affiliations with Richard Allen’s AME moved Varick, Christopher Rush, Abraham Thompson, and others to found the AMEZ in 1820. While slavery restricted the AMEZ to the Northeast during the

¹² S.M. Jackson(Ed.) (1908-1914), *In The new Schaff-Herzog encyclopedia of religious knowledge: embracing Biblical, historical, doctrinal, and practical theology and Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical biography from the earliest times to the present day* (Vol. 7, p. 351). New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls.

antebellum period, the denomination rapidly pushed into the former Confederacy even before the Civil War ended.”¹³

While Richard Allen and James Varick were organizing the AME and AMEZ denominations, the Methodist Episcopal Church was continuously struggling with the institution of slavery. The northern churches agreed to fight the slavery issue, while those churches in the south wanted to keep slavery. The reason for the southern churches to hold onto the institution of slavery was the economics. As this fight to end slavery intensified, there were persons in the northern churches who galvanized to end the institution of slavery.

“This new wave of abolitionism intensified. From 1836 until 1840 almost every annual conference outside of the south was besieged with petitions calling for the end of slavery. Although the bishops struggled to keep the lid on and prevent the abolitionists from fomenting disruption that threatened to split the church, they did not succeed. At the General Conference of 1844, the inevitable happened. The denomination that had been born sixty years before in Baltimore became two separate denominations: one South and one North, over the issue of slavery, and remained divided for almost a century. The price of reunion was costly to the blacks who remained in the Methodist Episcopal Church.”¹⁴

After the Civil War and the Northern states had declared victory, the churches in the South provided financial help to those blacks who were free and decided to open their

¹³ Carol V.R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and The Emergence of Independent Black Churches 1760-1840*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.) 9-10.

¹⁴ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Wither Thou Goest*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.) 61-62.

independent churches. One such denomination that organized was the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (formerly Colored Methodist Episcopal). “In 1866 the conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South authorized the bishops to organize its colored members “into an independent ecclesiastical body,” if it should appear that the members desired it. The bishops then formed a number of annual conferences, consisting wholly of colored preachers. These requested in 1870 the appointment of five as a commission to meet five of their own number to create an independent church. The convention chose as the name of the body “The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.” Two bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church South presided and ordained to the episcopacy two colored elders, W. H. Miles and R. H. Vanderhorst, selected by the eight colored conferences. The total value of church property then made over by the Methodist Episcopal Church South to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was \$1,500,000. Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South have given them plots of ground and aided them in building churches. Paine College, Augusta, Ga., (with an enrollment of 300 in 1907), and Lane College, Jackson, Tenn., are carried on by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church South. This church took over, from the body that had nourished it, the articles of religion and the forms of government. Its rules will not allow any others than negroes the privilege of membership. At the outset, there were but little more than 60,000 members; in 1909 it had 233,911, shepherded by 2,809 ministers and housed in 2,619 churches.”¹⁵

¹⁵ S.M. Jackson(Ed.) (1908-1914), *In The new Schaff-Herzog encyclopedia of religious knowledge: embracing Biblical, historical, doctrinal, and practical theology and Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical biography from the earliest times to the present day* (Vol. 7, p. 351). New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls.

As slavery came to an end, the Methodist Episcopal Church North, the Methodist Episcopal Church South continued to be at odds with each other. As time went on, there were meetings and talks about the reunification of the Methodist Church. The Methodist Episcopal, the Methodist Episcopal South, and the Methodist Protestant Churches came together in 1939 to reunify the Methodist Episcopal Church. The only problem with this reunion was that the church did not know what to do with the number of blacks that were members.

Once again discrimination, segregation, and racism reared their ugly heads and the thought of authentic community within the Methodist Episcopal Church was not to become a reality. The denomination voted for blacks to become a part of the Central Jurisdiction and not the five jurisdictions that everyone else belonged. It was in this jurisdiction that blacks could elect their bishops and deal with worship and other church matters on their terms. Even though blacks had equal membership in the national church, such as its General Conference, Boards and Agencies, and Council of Bishops, this was a big blow.

“The Central Jurisdiction, the sixth, was to be composed of the nineteen black conferences of the former northern Methodist Episcopal Church plus the black mission conferences and other black missions in the United States. By any definition, it was a racially segregated unit of the Church and the policy was written into the Constitution of The Methodist Church history that there was an official policy of segregation. The Methodist Church was, by the same token, establishing a policy of dealing with its black

membership on the basis of race. They were to be segregated at every connectional level of the church's life below that of its national structure.”¹⁶

This plan to have a Central Jurisdiction was voted on, and many blacks were opposed to the separation of persons of color. Even though many of them voted not to go forward with the plan, they were outnumbered by those whites who attended the conference. Blacks were under the assumption that they would be included in the Methodist Episcopal Church as a part of the community. The church created an entity that blatantly refused to create an authentic community where everyone had a seat at the table.

“Whatever power black Methodists thought they might have gained and were about to share with whites on an equal basis was soon realized as nonexistent. A black bishop was just that—a bishop of blacks and blacks only.”¹⁷ The opportunity to have a true authentic community where all of God's children had equal voice and vote was forfeited with the formation of the Central Jurisdiction. A petition was sent to the General Conference in 1956 allowing the transfer of churches and conferences out of the Central Jurisdiction and into regional conferences. In 1968 when the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church came together, a merger took place that created The United Methodist Church. It was also at this General Conference that the abolishment of the Central Jurisdiction and formal segregation took place.

¹⁶ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Wither Thou Goest*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.) 76.

¹⁷ McClain, *Black People Called Methodist*, 81.

Conclusion

The quest to create an authentic community in the twenty-first century still faces the “isms” of race and discrimination. The problem of race still has a hold on The United Methodist Church, and each week we gather in our separate churches that are in many instances based on race, class, socio-economic and power dynamics. Even within the churches on the Huntingtown Charge, there is a class and socio-economic situation that continues to divide persons who are not only related by blood but are relatives because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

The one thing that has divided us as a people, and especially people of color is race and the institution of slavery. Until we deal with the race issue in the church, the world will never understand what it means to be united. “Further, we conclude that black perceptions about the relevance and immediacy of Christianity to their social condition need not imply any threat to its universality. In fact, the principle idea the black churches sought to institutionalize—the parenthood of God and the kinship of all peoples—was not the creation of the black churches themselves. They merely sought the means of embodying it in their practice and as a moral claim on white churches to affirm in thought and practice the ‘kinship of all peoples’ as the practical inference of the ‘parenthood of God.’

Their primary mission has always been that of calling the nation to affect racial equality and justice (that is, the kinship of all peoples) within its borders. As previously stated, the formation of separate black churches has never been viewed as fully satisfying by blacks because of their great difficulty in relating it positively to their ideal of social

vision.”¹⁸ The Wesleyan or the Methodist Movement was organized so that persons who needed to hear about the love of God could experience that love. Wesley included everyone in his quest to bring about an authentic community.

The one thing that he was adamantly against was the one thing that led to a division in the church. The questions that we must ask ourselves as the church and the world is this: “Will the color of our skin be our hindrance from becoming the “Beloved Community?” Will we continue to divide ourselves on the issue of race without coming to the table and dealing with our issue? If we are going to deal with the issue of racism, then we must get to the heart of the matter and realize that racism is a theological problem.

“For too long in the Christian Church racism has not been perceived for what it is—a basic theological problem. The problem of race is at its deepest level not a factual problem, nor a moral problem, but a theological problem. Racism is a theological problem because it is sin. It is not merely a moral error, an error in judgment, or a social aberration. It is sin because it divides the human family and blurs the image of God in persons.”¹⁹

The fact that we are all created in the image of God means that we have the characteristics of God, and we are all called to the same purpose and destiny. Therefore, we must understand that God is not a respecter of persons. There is no color line with God because we have been called to love each other as God has loved us. The worth that

¹⁸ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Church*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.) 134.

¹⁹ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Wither Thou Goest*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.) 102.

we have does not come from the fact that we are black or white, but it comes from the fact that God decided to solve the “sin problem” by dying on the cross and giving all of us hope for a better today and tomorrow.

When God created humanity, we were all created equal. We must understand that the unity that we are seeking comes from the fact that we have a relationship with God and each other. “To divide what God has made as a unity and blur that image by judging persons by the color of their skin is to commit sin against God. It calls into question God’s creative action. For what it implies is that God has made a creative error in bringing into being the races other than white.”²⁰

As we create authentic community, we cannot confuse prejudices with racism. Our prejudices come when we pre-judge something or someone that does not quite have the same values or beliefs. Prejudice is an unfavorable opinion reached beforehand. One is racist when they take the prejudices and use their power to take advantage of a person or a group. Racism is controlling or enslaving persons because of their color.

²⁰ McClain, *Black People Called Methodist*, 102-103

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In analyzing the history of the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, the theological themes associated with this project are grounded in developing authentic community, unity in the body of Christ, and how that unity is lived out. The theological framework used is ecclesiological. The term ecclesiological means the study of the church and its doctrine. The burning concern or the theological issue within the context is the lack of unity that exists between a multi-point church that has the same pastor. As the pastor of this two-point charge in The United Methodist Church, there is disunity and in many cases the lack of hospitality within the congregations that prohibit them from working together to form a higher sense of unity and witness for the Kingdom of God.

The vision for the body of Christ which consists of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist churches being able to live out what the Apostle Paul speaks of in Ephesians Chapter 4 about maintaining or keeping the unity that the Spirit gives to us.

Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. (Eph. 4:1-6)

The two biblical passages used to state the argument and give guidance along this journey toward creating authentic community through intentional hospitality in a multi-point church comes from the Old Testament reading of Psalm 133 and the New Testament Acts 2:42-47. The reasons for choosing these two passages of scripture are: 1) the Old Testament speaks of the unity of the body, and 2) the New Testament speaks to the foundations of the church. The argument presented is the fact that the witness of God's Spirit is moving on the two congregations in a way that has produced healthy relationships. However, there is a sense that much more can be done to create an authentic community through intentional hospitality to enhance the Kingdom of God. The problem within this context is the lack of unity that occurs within the Charge.

Community means "common unity" among persons who live and work, socialize together to make the Kingdom of God and the world a better place. "Community is integrative. By its very nature, the authentic community includes persons of different races, sexes, ages, religions, cultures, viewpoints, lifestyles, and stages of development by integrating them into the whole that is greater-more actualized and dynamic-than the sum of its parts."¹

"The word unity means the state of being one, singleness, absence of diversity, concord, harmony; accord; uniformity; as a unity of sentiment. The Scriptures exhort children of God to live together in unity."² The goal of this project is to bring unity to the Huntingtown Charge so that oneness and singleness of mind, body, and spirit may help to bring further growth to the Kingdom of God. The Old Testament passage from Psalm

¹ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press 2005.) p.216.

²The Laymens Bible Encyclopedia. Nashville, Tennessee, 1964. The Southwestern Company.

133 speaks to the unity of the body. “The main theme of the psalm is the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. The psalmist here uses family imagery to evoke the joy and blessedness of living together in unity.”³ This Psalm speaks of the church and those persons who comprise the church; we must intentionally break down the walls and barriers that separate us from living in the authentic community.

The New Testament passage chosen is from the Book of Acts Chapter 2:42-47. This periscope speaks to the life and character of the early church and how they came together as a community. As we seek to create an authentic community in a multi-point charge, there is the reminder that this can only occur when the power of the Holy Spirit leads us. As we sense a lack of community in this multi-point charge, this passage from Acts 2 will help to create an authentic community, as we learn and live the way in which the early church lived. There are several elements contained in this passage of scripture that will move us to a place of authenticity and intentional hospitality. The breaking of bread together, times of prayer and fellowship, and learning God’s Word together will begin to break the lack of unity and community that exists.

“In the early church, hospitality, fellowship and a sense of community were exemplified in the intentional sharing of social, material, and spiritual gifts. Therefore, none within the community had a need as long as persons had resources to share. (Acts 2:22-45) When three thousand pilgrims who had been converted on the day of Pentecost remained in Jerusalem to be taught and established in the Christian faith, it was the church that accepted responsibility for them. (Acts 2:42-47) Paul wrote to the Romans:

³ C. Anthony Hunt, *Keep Looking Up: Sermons on the Psalms* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press, 2016.) p. 35.

‘Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.’ (Romans 12:10) There is a tremendous need among persons in contemporary society for a sense of community. There is a yearning for a sense of belonging. The willingness of persons to intentionally share diverse religious, social and cultural experiences can serve as the impetus for community that is enriched, empowered, and enlightened toward the realization of peace.”⁴

Creating an authentic community in a multi-point church or charge is not just about persons coming together to sing and worship together. Creating an authentic community is when the people of God intentionally seeking to bring unity to the body of Christ and then to the broader world. Without our understanding that we were created to be in fellowship with others, an authentic community will never take place. Authentic community is about us bringing unity and wholeness to the total person, by loving one another.

Main Body

The God that enters in and participates in our everyday living is a God of order. It was in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, that God brought order from a chaotic situation. It is here in these first two chapters that God brings about community and our need for one another. “As God speaks and things begin to happen, humanity is created and given responsibility to name and be in union with nature. As God sees that humanity

⁴ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Wyndham Hall Press, Lima, OH, 2005) p. 201

(male) could not exist or be alone, the woman created from the rib of man. It is through this creation that the first sign of community is brought into being.”⁵

“What emerges out of the brooding formlessness called chaos, is order. Any part of nature say, a rock, a tree, or a man—is an expression of order. The relation between a rock, a tree, and a man is also an expression of order. Where the mind cannot see order, it sees chaos. Chaos is always giving way to order as knowledge and insight develop.”⁶

God seeks a community that is inclusive of all of humanity. As we aim to create an authentic community that is intentional about loving each other as God has loved us, we must understand that all persons, regardless of their race, nationality, physical condition are welcomed to the community. As people of God, we must live in harmony and to be real examples of Jesus Christ.

Throughout life, God is the God of unity and community, and it is there in the community that we realize the gifts and graces that help to make an authentic community a reality. It is through the grace of God by faith through Jesus Christ that reconciliation takes place. It is God’s love for us that we have renewed relationship with the Creator. Grace means the unmerited favor of God shown toward us; it is God’s gift to us, and we have done nothing to deserve this grace. Out of the abundance of God’s love, reconciliation is evident in our love for God and each other.

“Particularly in the Hebrew Bible, sin, like grace, is not primarily related to the individual but to the community, the people: the word describes the orientation of

⁵ Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground*, (Richmond, Indiana, Friends United Press) 1971. 9.

⁶ Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground*, p.9.

community.”⁷ Theologically, grace is the reconciliation of relationship between God and humanity. It is through this grace that we realize the separation we have with the God of Creation and reconciliation comes through the death of Jesus Christ. “Just as in sin we separate ourselves from God, so God reconciles himself with us in grace. That is the basic Christian affirmation. God’s turning to us is grace, which removes the obstacles to the relationship between God and human beings. If sin means separation, segregation, isolation, alienation, then grace is the reunion of the living with the origin of life—and thus precisely what God wills. It is simply the happiness of no longer being separated.”⁸

God’s original meaning for humanity was for us to live together in community, one with the other, creating a space of fellowship and love. God’s intent for creation is to live together in harmony and community; no matter who we are, where we have come from, or what our socio-economic background may be. The Prophet Isaiah gives us a picture of how we are to be in a relationship with all of God’s creations.

2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth, will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Is 11:2–9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

⁷ Dorothy Soelle, *Thinking about God: An Introduction to Theology*, (Eugene, OR, Wipf & Stock,) 1990. 77.

⁸ Soelle, *Thinking about God*, 78.

As Howard Thurman states in his book *The Search for Common Ground*, “Here the intent of the Creator in creation is that community shall be a literal fact in the fulfillment of life at every level. The actualization of this potential is the dream that is nourished in each expression of life.”⁹

We have been created by the Almighty God to live in community with one another through the grace of Christ. It is through the love and grace of God that we are called to be in community with one another. Creating an authentic community where all creations are in the image of God, we must be willing to embrace the life and lifestyles of other persons. God’s intentions were for humanity to dwell together in a life of peace and love. “The love that is the very essence of God, as embodied in Christ, is the love that Christians are called to convey to the world. In seeking to create peaceful community, God’s love must be translated into a love that demonstrates and perpetuates itself through acts of faithfulness toward other persons. Love, as lived out in peaceful community, seeks to embrace the other’s culture, beliefs, perspectives, and ideologies. Love within the context of living into peaceful community means seeking to develop the capacity to love our enemies, in spite of, and perhaps even because of our differences.”¹⁰

Even though grace is God’s gift toward us, it is the unmerited favor of God. We must realize that grace is not “cheap grace.” When creating an authentic community, we must understand that it will cost us something to live our lives in the image of God.

⁹ Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground*, (Richmond, Indiana, Friends United Press) 1971. 46.

¹⁰ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press 2005.) p.44.

Therefore, grace for us should not be anything that we take lightly or for granted. It cost God, the Creator, something so that we might live in relationship with God and each other. The grace in which we experience is a costly grace, and we must extend that grace considering the community as if it hurts us and our lives depend upon it. Cheap grace, for example, is like the person who wants people in their group, but the reality is that they only want them for the sake of adding numbers to the group. This person is not looking to extend the unmerited favor of God to those in the group; they are not seeking to create authentic community.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains the “cheap grace is the moral enemy of our church. Our struggle today is for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace as bargain-basement goods, cut-rate forgiveness, cut-rate comfort, cut-rate sacrament; grace as the church’s inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit. It is grace without a price, without costs. It is said that the essence of grace is that the bill for it is paid in advance for all time.”¹¹

When we cheapen the grace of God, we deny the power that grace has in our lives, and we are not allowing the power of God to take up residence in our lives, communities, churches, or world. We are going through the motions of living out the will of God, and no one benefits from an authentic community or the love of Jesus Christ when we go through the motions. When our forgiveness towards others is not genuine then tensions are caused in the body of Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *Discipleship* speaks of grace and how grace should cost us something. Grace that costs us something means that we have decided to

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2001) p. 43.

intentionally live the way in which God would have us to live. Additionally, we are deciding to die to ourselves and live in the ways of Christ. In an authentic community, we must declare within ourselves that we are willing to suffer and even die for what we want and seek to create a community with others. As we look theologically at “costly grace,” we will intentionally without pretense seek to love and serve those in the world and community the way in which Christ would have us to do. We must understand that it is not about us; but it is about the fact that God gave his only Son so that we might be a part of the body of Christ. Costly grace means that we must die for others to live.

Bonhoeffer speaks of “costly grace” in this way:

Costly grace is the hidden treasure in the field, for the sake of which people go and sell with joy everything they have. It is the costly pearl, for whose price the merchant sells all he has, it is Christ’s sovereignty, for the sake of which you tear out an eye if it causes you to stumble. It is the call of Jesus Christ which causes a disciple to leave his nets and follow him. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which has to be asked for, the door at which one has to knock. It is costly, it calls to discipleship; it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.¹²

In our quest to create an authentic community, we must understand that our time together in fellowship and relationship is key to our success in building community. The one thing learned over the years is that God is no respecter of persons, and God has uniquely created us all. The kingdom of God is a present reality, as well as a future reality. We are representatives of the kingdom while here on earth, and our task is to make sure that the whole of humanity is a part of that kingdom. We are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.

¹² Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* 44-45.

“The centrality of the doctrine of the kingdom of God led him to conclude that the Christian religion is essentially corporate and communal in character. It is humanity organized according to the will of God and the organized fellowship of humanity acting under the impulse of love. Since love is the supreme law of Christ, the kingdom means a progressive reign of love in human affairs. Love is best expressed as service to others; it might necessitate the surrender of one’s property and privileges.”¹³ The inclusive human community seeks to help persons with issues that pertain to race, socio-economic, ethnicity, and religious aspects of life.

The reality of life is that we need each other to grow. Creating an authentic community helps us to learn from one another and gives us the opportunity to dwell together in unity. Our unity comes from the fact that we have been reconciled to God by faith through the grace that God has given us in Jesus Christ. God has a way of giving us unutterable joy when we decide to live in fellowship and unity each day with one another. “Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God’s grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.”¹⁴

Historically, when we conducted ministry in the church and the community, there was a time when the church was the center of the community. Not many decisions were made in the community, especially the “black community” without the involvement of the “church.” Blacks were not allowed to be a part of the authentic community that God

¹³ Kenneth L. Smith, and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pa 1998) pp. 39 & 40.

¹⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 1954) p.20.

had initially devised and set up. We were challenged to ensure that community was lived out in people of color. Churches in the black community were the start of many formal education centers. Despite the way blacks were treated from slavery to Jim Crow, segregation and desegregation; there were many ways in which an authentic community came into being, and the church was at the center.

After reviewing the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, the crux of ministry and its theological edge come from the fact that persons inside the church became the first ones to do things for the community. God used persons to be the first in the black community to start a bus company when black children were not allowed to ride the bus with whites. In both congregations, educators used their gifts and talents that God had given them to educate many persons in the community. Within the congregation, entrepreneurs came into being with the establishment of the Sewell Funeral Home. This was one of the first black funeral homes in Calvert County. Not only did Sewell provide comfort to the families in the community, but they also offered an ambulance service with their hearse because blacks were not able to ride in ambulances. Many of these families were members of various community organizations such as the Masons, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and owners of school buses within the county. It was through these agencies that certain things such as loans, land, and transportation to and from school for African Americans took place.

In creating an authentic community through intentional hospitality, the belief is that God is calling the church, the body of believers, to become the leaders of the community and society. We have seemingly lost the connection with the community as

we once had. The power of God is actualized when individuals operate as a functioning community, that is, having the support of one another. It just seems that the authentic community concept has become a thing of ‘I got mine, and you better get yours.’ The church must take our rightful place as the ones who display what God initially set community to be.

Our quest for an authentic community must be God-breathed and God-inspired through the movement and power of the Holy Spirit. With the promptings and leading of the Holy Spirit, we can discover the potential we have to live in harmony and unity with each other. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said these words about unity brought about by love:

Neither God nor man will individually bring the world’s salvation. Rather, both Man and God made one in a marvelous unity of purpose through the overflowing of love...can transform the old into the new and drive out the deadly cancer of sin.” (King, *Strength to Love*, 124) “The development of authentic, peaceful community will require God-connectedness through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As God inspires persons, peace will become the reality that will lead to authentic community.¹⁵

During slavery, the fathers were not present in the lives of the family because of the master’s constant presence.

But the new economic conditions which resulted from Emancipation tended to place the Negro man in a position of authority in family relations. The man or husband in the family was required to sign the rent or work agreements. Sometimes the wives were also required to sign, but the husband or father was always held responsible for the behavior of his family. The more stable elements among the freedmen who had been in a position to assimilate the sentiments and ideas of their former masters soon undertook to buy land.¹⁶

¹⁵ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press 2005.) p. 191

¹⁶ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1974) p. 39.

After slavery, the importance of community became the key to moving persons ahead, and the church was an integral part of making this happen. Blacks had gone from having nothing to being able to provide for their families through the buying of land and other resources. The support of the community proved to be the one thing that fathers needed to have authority in the household.

There was, of course, moral support for a patriarchal family to be found in the Bible and this fact contributed undoubtedly a holy sanction to the new authority of the Negro man in the family. However, there were more important ways in which the Negro Church gave support to Negro family life with the father in a position of authority. As we pointed out, after Emancipation the Negro had to create a new communal life or become integrated into the communities created by the Negroes who were free before the Civil War. The leaders in creating a new community life were men who with their families worked the land or began to buy land or worked as skilled artisans. It is important to observe that these pioneers in the creation of communal life generally built a church as well as homes.¹⁷

Because we were created to be in fellowship with one another and those things that God has given unto us, we must know the people who are in the community. As I view the two churches on the Huntingtown Charge, the individuals who worship together, study the Bible together, sing together, and even serve together will know each other fully as authentic community is created. If we are going to create an authentic community, we must put ourselves in the position to not just serve folk, but we must learn who they are, where they have come from, and what has brought them to this present place.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, famously stated, “The world is my parish.” His statement reminds us that we have a fabulous opportunity to interact,

¹⁷ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 39.

engage, build relationships, and make disciples with the people living and working in the communities surrounding us. We must view the community as our congregation.”¹⁸

The other thing that helps us with creating an authentic community the way in which God intended it to be is that we must have heartbreak. Heartbreak is defined as when our hearts ache over the fact that many of our communities are broken and they are looking for the church to bring about the authentic relationship? The community is waiting for the church to be the church and be the leader in dealing with the ills and injustices that plague our communities.

One of the greatest challenges to the church in the twenty-first century is its lack of connection to its community. Far too many churches today have become drive-in, spiritual, social clubs and not the agents of community vitality and life transformation they used to be. As a result, communities are suffering, churches are dying, and far too many people are searching for hope in all the wrong places.¹⁹

An authentic community is not authentic when we seek to pit ourselves against others and call ourselves ‘doing it in the name of God’. We must have a relationship with God and with each other for an authentic community to take place. An authentic community and leadership are not authentic if we are not willing to get ourselves dirty and learn that people are created in the image of the Almighty God and are not objects. Our authenticity must take us to a place of wholeness. “And until you own up to participating in that, or at the very least, embracing it fully as your own, those whom your heart breaks for will not see you as an authentic leader. You can’t authentically lead with

¹⁸ Joseph W. Daniels, Jr., *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is Your Congregation*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2014) p. xiii.

¹⁹ Daniels, Jr., *Walking with Nehemiah*, xi.

people until you go beyond the point of seeing them as objects. You must see them as co-laborers with you to bring about what is just, fair, and true.”²⁰

Conclusion

The theological stream of this work is of an ecclesiological nature. This work begins with the beginning and how we are created by God to live in fellowship with another. The need seen within this context is to bring persons together in unity and love so that the Kingdom of God is lived out. When we create an authentic community through intentional hospitality, we must know how we arrived at our place in Christ. In this project, the goal or vision is to help the congregations know and understand their most significant contributions to the body of Christ.

The belief is that the only way in which we can make this happen is through the “agape” love of Jesus Christ. For a community to be an authentic community, we must display the awesome love of Jesus Christ. If we are to be the “Beloved Community,” we must have Christian love. “The third major theological source King’s conception of the Beloved Community was Christian love (agape). King defined agape as “redeeming good will for all men...It is the love of God operating in the human heart.” Agape creates genuine personal relations between people, making them neighbors and friends. In other words, as King interpreted agape, it is linked with his conception of community. Love is a community creating force. It is the only force that can bring community into existence

²⁰ Daniels, Jr., *Walking with Nehemiah*, 33.

because its inherent unselfishness leads to cooperation instead of competition and conflict.”²¹

The unconditional love of Jesus Christ is paramount to our having an authentic community. When we learn to love regardless of our status in life, our positions in life, or where we might have come from on the social ladder, we will achieve.

The way in which I see this project being used in many different sites, especially those sites with multi-point churches or cooperative parishes is through modeling love and hospitality within before we can go outside. Here are some ways in which we can live out the purpose and plan of God in our lives. First, we must look at the needs of the people in the context or congregation and understand that all of us stand in need of the love of God and that we are of great value in the eyes of God. As stated earlier in this chapter, our hearts need to break for those in the community because if we do not feel the pain of others then authentic community will never take place. When I look at my context and the hurt and pain they were in eight years ago helped me to see that there was a need for authentic community. The congregations struggled with worshiping together on the fifth Sunday’s when there was a joint worship experience. The push into heartbreak that this model brings about came through teaching and preaching, and the fact that I as the pastor modelled love that was unconditional toward everyone. I would admit that this was challenging in the early stages of my context and there was some push back, but I continued to love the people as Christ has called us to love.

²¹ Kenneth L. Smith, and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pa 1998)

Second, we need to know that we are not alone in this process and even in the face of life's difficulties; love and grace surround us. Third, when it comes to love and hospitality, we need to know that the peace of God surpasses all understanding and that there is hope that sustains us in our most difficult times.

Fourth, as we create this authentic community of love and hospitality, we must know and understand that the only way we can serve and love one each other is to be willing to listen and learn from those around us. Fifth, building an authentic community of love and hospitality is help people know and understand that life is worth living and that life is not about what we can get out of it, but what we can give to it. Last, to build an authentic community of love and hospitality, we must make sure that people have a purpose and they are invited into the "Beloved Community" despite their race, status, or socio-economic situation.

Creating an authentic community is not about settling or being satisfied with the status quo, but about challenging persons and structures to live a life of love so that others are a part of the community. It is through the grace of God that we are moved to create an authentic community where love and hospitality are enacted or lived out in what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. describes the "Beloved Community." "Radical hospitality describes churches that strive without ceasing to exceed expectations to accommodate and include others. A congregation marked by such hospitality adopts an invitational posture that changes everything it does."²²

²² Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation: Radical Hospitality*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008),

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The theoretical framework of creating an authentic community of intentional hospitality in a multi-point church deal with bringing together two congregations that have the same pastor. This project is being built upon the theme, "Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church." It calls for leaders and laity to be trained in their roles so that the body of Christ can develop the community within and outside the church. Within this structure, the goals for creating an authentic community through leadership education includes 1) to build community within the congregations that are genuine so that congregants can communicate and collaborate with each other and to love and serve unconditionally. 2) To actively involve the community in radical hospitality that is intentional. 3) To pursue outcomes such as Intentional Faith Development that will enable parishioners to create an authentic community through Bible Study and small groups.

The resources used are as follows: (1) *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (2) *Creating the Beloved Community: A Handbook for Spiritual Leadership.* (3) *Intentional Living: Choosing a Life that Matters* by John Maxwell. (4) *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Congregation is Your Community* by Joseph W. Daniels, Jr. (5) *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase. (6)

Spiritual Community: The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment, and (7) Joy, and Where the Edge Gathers: Building Community of Radical Inclusion.

These resources used in the theoretical foundations' paper are as follows: The *Search for Beloved Community* will help us to understand the meaning of Beloved Community and what that community entails. *Walking with Nehemiah* will help us to realize that not only are we to create an authentic community in our contexts, but we are to ultimately move from inside the community to understanding our role in the broader community. In John Maxwell's *Intentional Living*, we will come to know what it means to be intentional about how we live with and treat others who are a part of our community. *The Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation* by Robert Schnase helps us to look at our hospitality toward others and to make sure that we are "radical" in our hospitality; as well as intentional in making sure that each person has a sense of belonging. This book also ensures that we are intentional in our faith development to the point that others are maturing in their spiritual growth. The book *Spiritual Community* helps us to recognize what community is and what it takes to have a community in its most authentic form. "Having community implies having both commitment and ability. There are many different kinds of responsibilities and skills, and each of them varies in strength. The power of community and the shape of the community will vary depending on a large number of these variables. Many variables are beyond our individual control, but others—especially those related to commitments, values, and ideas are very much in our hands."¹

¹ David A Teutsch, *Spiritual Community: The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment, and Joy*, (Woodstock, Vermont, Jewish Light Publishing, 2005) p. 46

Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice

The resources that best facilitate the approach or methodology in addressing the issues in the project are *The Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation and Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is Your Congregation*. Joseph Daniels has done the most recent work as it relates to creating an authentic community or the "beloved community" in his book entitled *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is Your Congregation*. In this book, we come to understand what it takes to have an authentic community and that our participation and engagement in that community is essential. In reviewing the context known as the Huntingtown Charge which consists of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist Churches, we are engaged in the community, but we are not as engaged with others. The belief is that if we can create an authentic community in these two churches, then we will be able to reach out with power and witness to the broader community.

The assumptions that are made concerning the topic "Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church" is that we should all live in a community where the love of Christ abounds. The assumption is that because we are Christians, then everyone should be invited to the table and treated as persons created in the image of God. As we work together in an authentic community, the result is that an atmosphere of intentional hospitality will occur. The other assumption that "Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality" brings to light is the fact that we as The United Methodist Church are a part of a connectional system. As

such, we should be willing to work together to make sure communities are authentic. We should be ready to work as one because unity brings about community.

As we look at the world and all its changes down through the years, the community has almost become non-existent because of our thoughts and desires. Materialism and other things have come to change the way we view community. Some years ago, we were a part of a clan or a village. Within that village, we had values, beliefs, and a sense of belonging. In his book, *Spiritual Community: The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment, and Joy*, David Teutsch states,

"Most residents of contemporary American society live with that loss. It is expressed in feelings of depression or isolation, and in uncontrolled aggression and antisocial actions like vandalism, cheating, and petty theft. Why don't we express our loss more clearly and then do something about it? I would like to suggest three reasons: First of all, most of us have never experienced community in the strong sense, so we do not know what we are missing. Second, the term community is so frequently used in a restricted sense (e.g., medical community, Los Angeles community, virtual community) that most of us have become cynical about it. Third, the maintenance of community appears to conflict with our privacy, personal freedom, and economic opportunity, and perhaps to require significant effort. And so, unfortunately many of us live most of our lives outside clan and community, lives limited by shallow roots in tradition and heritage."²

Therefore, when viewing the context and the problems that exist, the understanding that many of the persons who gather each week must have the mindset that community for them is the group they gather with all week. However, if an authentic community is to take place; then as a multi-point church, the community must be a collective unit striving to show the love of Jesus Christ to the broader community. In looking at the challenges that are before us, we must help leaders, as well as the

² Teutsch, *Spiritual Community*, 101

congregation, to begin to imagine an active community where everyone experiences community, especially those persons who are on the margins.

Joseph Daniels in his book *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is Your Congregation* states that “One of the greatest challenges to the church in the twenty-first century is its lack of connection to its community. Far too many churches today have become drive-in, spiritual social clubs and not the agents of community vitality and life transformation they used to be. As a result, communities are suffering, churches are dying, and far too many people are searching for hope in all the wrong places.”³ I agree with Daniels in the sense that we have lost touch with the community and we have lost contact with the persons we worship with, pray with, and serve within our local congregations. In the context known as the Huntingtown Charge, our struggle is with what it means to be an authentic community. We are a caring group of people, but there is a sense that we are not in contact with the aching hearts of individuals who think they are a part of the community, but find themselves on the margins even in the places where they worship. Creating an authentic community takes us to a place where we will not dare to go, and that is to a place of hurt and heartbreak. When we refuse to look at the heartbreak in our context which is called community, then we will never know or understand what others are feeling.

One of the things that will help to create authentic community is our love for one another and God. Jesus declares in Matthew 22 that we are to love God with everything that we have and our neighbors as we do ourselves. When we love self the way in which

³ Joseph W. Daniels, Jr., *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is Your Congregation*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2014) p. xi.

God loves us, then we will have no problem loving each other in an authentic community. Rudy Rasmus in his book *Love Period: When All Else Fails* states "When we begin to reach out to others with unconditional love, we create community. An authentic, Christ-like community is one that calls for all people involved to be loved, no matter their job, status, gender, class, or place of residence."⁴

The resources that have been chosen to bring to light the theme "Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church" is bringing a greater focus on how an authentic community can be experienced and lived out. There are some key concepts through which the research and resources will help to bring to light the belief in living out the authentic community. In the book *Where the Edge Gathers: Building Community of Radical Inclusion*, Yvette A. Flunder speaks of creating and sustaining community in this way. "Creating community with and among marginalized people who have been alienated from the Christian community must include encouragement to seek an intimate relationship with God. An assurance of a relationship with God provides the security to interpret critically the scriptures and traditions that have alienated so many for so long."⁵

If we are going to create an authentic community where everyone is accepted and included, then we must sustain that community. If we create that community without freeing persons to be authentic in that community; then we are enslaving individuals within the community.

⁴ Rudy Rasmus, *Love Period: When All Else Fails*, (Worthy Publishing, Brentwood TN, 2014) p. 106.

⁵ Yvette A. Flunder, *Where the Edge Gathers: Building a Community of Radical Inclusion*, (The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland OH, 2005) p. 8

"If we are free from evil, hatred, and dysfunction, we are constrained to help establish the beloved community, where all can live free. For a community to thrive, there must be an understanding of a faithful community-building behavior and a disseminating of duties and chores. Faithful community-building behavior suggests that each member of the community concerns him/herself with the effect of her/his behavior on the good of the community. The dissemination of duties and chores ensures that all members share in and contribute to the welfare of the community. Additionally, sustaining Christian community requires an intentional effort to design a framework that includes everyone in the life of the church. We must constantly revisit the commitment to be inclusive and compassionate along with being responsible and accountable. Sustaining community in an atmosphere of openness and mutual vulnerability requires a conscientious look at village ethics for a people whose common denominator is oppression, but whose lives and lifestyles may differ greatly."⁶

The common denominator for us to create and sustain an authentic community is to show the love of God to everyone and to make sure that we are intentionally inviting and accepting those who are different. Our task in creating an authentic community is to have persons to be free to operate in their gift. In creating an authentic community, we must not focus on ourselves and how we can continue to keep ourselves insular. If community, especially an authentic community is going to take root in our congregations and community, then we will have to intentional about other people being a part of that society. John Maxwell in his book *Intentional Living: Choosing a Life That Matters* states,

"Self-centeredness is the root of virtually every problem—both personally and globally. And whether we want to admit it or not, it's a problem all of us have. Self-centered people don't create communities that endure. Selfishly believing that we are not our brothers' keeper is not sustainable. If we want to achieve significance, then we need to become more intentional about getting beyond ourselves and putting other people first."⁷

⁶ Flunder, *Where the Edge Gathers*, p. 12-13

⁷ John C. Maxwell, *Intentional Living: Choosing a Life That Matters*, (Center Street, New York, 2015) p. 110

The pros of being an authentic community are that we are all in one accord, loving and supporting each other in ministry and the world. An authentic community seeks to make sure that everyone is included and accepted as part of the overall community. The authentic community aims to make sure that all beliefs, values, and attributes of the community are lived out amongst every person. The cons of creating or living out authentic community is that we many times are not true to ourselves, we at best learn to tolerate or deal with each other on a superficial level. Justin Deeter in his Blog entitled, *6 Ways You Can Create Authentic Community in Your Church* states “we all tend to long for authentic community. We want it. We need it. Yet, a culture of authentic community in the church can be hard to foster. There is the great pressure to present your life as an ideal Christian, so we hide our struggles and slap on our plastic smiles. The pressure to have it all together has turned the church into an actor's guild perfecting their religious masks. But playacting is the death of authentic Christian Community.”⁸

One of the persons that have addressed the theme “Creating Authentic Community” is the Reverend Rudy Rasmus. Reverend Rasmus has been pastoring Saint John UMC in Downtown Houston, Texas for twenty-four years. This community is comprised mostly of homeless persons who are near the church. The persons have been welcomed into the “beloved community” and are realizing their worth in God. Reverend Rudy has created this authentic community with a handful of people as members, and the love and compassion of Jesus Christ for the least, the last, and the lost. It has been through his life that God has used him to bring healing and wholeness to persons who have been overlooked by the church and society. The authentic or beloved community is

⁸ Justin Deeter, <http://www.justindeeter.com/archives/2108>. November 3, 2014

lived out at St. John UMC because Rev. Rudy has demonstrated what it takes to be a community. He speaks of the four C's in his book, *Love Period: When All Else Fails*. The four C's for him and his community are: 1) Compassion. We feel honored when compassion is shown to us. 2) Charity. We must understand that charity does not make us feel good, but it is about us helping others to feel good. 3) Collaboration. Our collaboration with others helps us to concentrate on their needs. 4) Consistency. We must be consistent with others and not be wishy-washy persons, or community does not take root.

Contextually what has worked and what has not worked as we move to create authentic community in a multi-point church are as follows: 1) The way in which we create authentic community is through our joint Bible Study which occurs on Wednesday afternoon and Wednesday night. This Bible Study is a charge study of members of both churches as well as persons who are from the community. The learnings gleaned from the joint bodies has produced growth and fellowship amongst those individuals who attend each week. 2) Every fifth Sunday worship service allows for experiences which are shared with a time of anointing and prayer. Our Huntingtown Charge mass choir sings the music for this worship experience. 3) The other ministry area that is working for the Huntingtown Charge is our outreach food ministry held on the second and third Tuesday's of the month. Even though the ministries are not working together per se, they are working as a unified group to make sure that our seniors in the community, as well as those who are shut-in, are provided hot meals on two Tuesday's of the month.

The one thing that has not worked in this shared worship experience is the fact that there are persons who will not attend or worship in each other's sanctuary. Because

of past animosity and division, persons have made up in their minds that they will not worship one with the other. 2) The other thing that has not worked in the ministry has been *The Five Practices of a Fruitful Congregation* by Robert Schnase. A possible reason is a division occurred between the churches due to the outgoing pastor.. The model seemingly worked at one church and not at the other because leadership did not make the same treatment of persons. The way to address the need is by using this model on a Charge level instead of an individual church level. The vision for this model is to use the five elements that Robert Schnase has presented with the overall Huntingtown Charge.

The new insights and methodologies used in this approach to create authentic community in a multi-point church are to use this concept for the entire charge. Robert Schnase uses the themes of *Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity*. With the methodologies of Authentic Hospitality, we seek to help the community known as the Huntingtown Charge to understand that when we are genuine, sincere, or authentic in our hospitality, then we are showing the love of Christ to the least of these. Along with Authentic Hospitality, there is the common thread of Authentic Worship, Authentic Intentional Faith Development, Authentic Mission and Service, and Authentic Generosity.

With these methodologies or steps in mind, we seek to create authentic behavior in every aspect of our church community, as well as the community that surrounds us. These methods will come through our preaching, Bible study, and our service to each other and the broader community. The overall idea is to bring persons from both

churches together in settings that will help to promote authenticity amongst each other. Moreover, if we are genuine with one another, then we are in a better position to be authentic with those persons who are not a part of our community on an average basis.

Lovett Weems in his book, *Church Leadership: Vision Team Culture Integrity*, defines leadership in this way, “Leadership is the development and articulation of a shared vision, motivation of those key people without whom that vision cannot become a reality, and gaining the cooperation of most of the people involved.”⁹ Weems offers that in every organization there needs to be a shared vision. He maps out several functions of a vision that will lead to healthy teams or in the Huntingtown Charge, authentic community.

According to Lovett Weems, there are six aspects to having a vision. *1. A Vision Unites.* In creating an authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge, our vision must be one of our present realities and one that moves us toward the future. *2. A Vision Energizes.* In an authentic community, people are excited and enthusiastic about where they are going. They move from a place of complacency to action. *3. A Vision Focuses Priorities.* In creating authentic community, we must remember that our primary purpose is to build a place of intentionality and love where hospitality is genuine. We cannot achieve this goal if we are not focused on where God is moving us and if we are at odds with each other. *4. A Vision Serves as the Ultimate Standard.* Authentic Community can only be authentic when it understands that the driving force or the standard by which that community exists is a vision. Vision must be the vehicle by which the congregations

⁹ Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, Integrity*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1993) p. 12-13.

know and realize that if it does not align with the vision, then it will not work. 5. *A Vision Raises Sights*. In creating an authentic community, the vision moves us to another level of our commitment to become an authentic community. With the standards set high, we expect much more from ourselves and how we treat and interact with each other. 6. *A Vision Invites and Draws Others*. If we are committed to creating authentic community and we are determined to love each other with intentionality; then and only then will others begin to become a part of the community. In authentic community, we must be intentional and allow persons to be who they are.¹⁰

The lack of authentic community in a multi-point church or charge must get its beginnings from what we define the community to be. Community is "common unity" among persons who live, work, socialize together to make the Kingdom of God and the world a better place. "Community is integrative. By its very nature, the authentic community includes persons of different races, sexes, ages, religions, cultures, viewpoints, lifestyles, and stages of development by integrating them into the whole that is greater more actualized and dynamic than the sum of its parts."¹¹

If we are to create an authentic community, then we will have to learn how to rid ourselves of all the divisions that we face. Community in and of itself cannot exist authentically if racism, sexism, denominationalism, politicisms, and tribalism divide us. We must understand that authentic community in all of its diversity is achievable when we decide to open ourselves in conversation with each other. "The recognition and valuation of diversity entail several presumptions about God the creator, and the

¹⁰ See pp. 44-48 for the principles that Weems uses.

¹¹ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press 2005.) p.216.

humanity that has been created by God. Christian ethicist J. Phillip Wogaman refers to this as the method of positive presumption."¹²

According to Wogaman, we presume: (1) *The goodness of created existence*. God created humanity (all humans) in goodness and wholeness. God's divine intention for created humanity is goodness and wholeness (shalom). (2) *The value of human life*. In each person, there is sacred and infinite worth as a result of humanity's creation of God's image (imago Dei). (3) *The unity of the human family*. Humans have not been created to live in a vacuum, but in community with one another. Because of our creation by the same God, we are all interconnected and interrelated. (4) *The equality of all persons in God*. As God created all individuals in the image of God, and as there is unity among humans in God, there is also equality among all people.

Another way that our communities are impacted or affected is through our culture. We are all from differing cultures, and it is in that culture that we are identified...

According to Eric Law in *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*,

we learned the validity of the two kinds of communities in a multicultural environment. One is the monocultural community in which, especially for communities of color, people can function naturally and comfortably within their cultural boundaries. The purpose of the monocultural community is twofold: (1) to find identity and self-esteem as a group; and (2) to do homework together before encountering other cultural communities.

The second kind of community consists of a time and place where these different monocultural communities can encounter each other in dialogue. This requires the leaders of the communities to be intentional about drawing culturally diverse people together. It also requires commitment from all participants because each person will be asked to step beyond his or her cultural boundaries. Most of them will be asked to act in unnatural ways.¹³

¹² Hunt, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*. 47-48. J. Phillip Wogaman, *Christian Moral Judgment* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), discusses the method of positive presumption on pages 89-115.

¹³ Eric H.F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*, (Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 1993), p. 79-80.

The problems that we face in our communities when it comes to culture is that we do not want to give away the power that we have. Many times, the dominant culture has a hard time releasing the power or giving the power away so that others might share in that power. Our problem within the community is that we ask for volunteers to be a part of the community, and we do not always get the volunteers we need to bring about an authentic community. If we are going to create an authentic community, then we will have to look for other ways in which we get persons to become a part.

According to Eric Law in *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, he gives us an alternative to our asking for volunteers. “An alternative to volunteering is invitation. Invitation is a way of giving away power. Accepting an invitation is a way to claim power. Waiting to be invited is a way to take up the cross. Invitation becomes a spiritual discipline for multicultural leaders. Three processes dominate group dynamics. My experience has proved to me that none of these processes works very well in a multicultural setting.”¹⁴

Eric Law gives us three processes that do not work all that well when it comes to creating authentic community. The first process that he speaks of is volunteering. In this process, an authentic community was difficult because persons are asked to volunteer information when they feel comfortable in sharing. However, the assumption with this theory is that many individuals do not feel comfortable or empowered to speak in a group session without being invited to speak. In a multicultural society, the dominant group is very comfortable with sharing, while the lesser team feels intimidated.

¹⁴ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. 81

The second process that Law speaks of is “going around the circle.” This process does not work. Even though everyone in the group is included, persons become anxious and the art of listening becomes hard. In an authentic community, this process is not right because the individual who is next is preoccupied with what they need to say next. Things have a tendency to move along quickly in this process. The third process is the "commander" method. This method does not work quite well because the person who is leading can call on anyone in the group. This process lends itself to the lesser group because it gives them the authority to speak. The dominant group does not care for it because it lends itself to being dictatorial in nature.

The process in which Eric Law creates that works well with the authentic community and multicultural groups is known as "Mutual Invitation." Mutual Invitation is valid because it allows persons to share without anyone being the expert in the conversation or subject. After the first person has spoken, he or she invites others to share in the discussion, and if that person has nothing to share at that moment, then he or she is free to "pass," therefore inviting someone else to share.

This process of mutual invitation decentralizes the power that is usually held by the designated leader. In this process, the facilitator spends some time introducing the process, shares, and invites the person. At that point, the facilitator ceases to have the power to control because who will speak next is now up to the person to whom he or she has just given the power to speak. This is what giving power away means. It is a practical way of practicing the spirituality of the cross. To many whites who are in control, this process can be very uncomfortable. To some, it is a relief because anxiety and stress tend to come with having power all the time.¹⁵

When we use Mutual Invitation in our communities, it is by no means a perfect model, but it gives those in the community the experience to exercise their power within

¹⁵ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. 83-84

the group. What this model does is to give those who are powerless, the power to have their voices heard and to have shared power within the group.

Saul Alinsky in his book *Rules for Radicals*, states “we are concerned with how to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people, to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, cooperation, equal and full opportunities for education, full and useful employment, health, and the creation of those circumstances in which man can have the chance to live by values that give meaning to life.”¹⁶ One of the things that Alinsky points to about community organizing is the fact that there must be a level of education.

According to Alinsky the ways to make sure that the community is empowered and organized is through education and communication. Through education, Alinsky states that one must have curiosity. This curiosity must be to the point that the organizer searches and goes after what is needed to make the community better. The community organizer must be creative and imaginative. As such, one must be creative and have the imagination to bring the community to a place and space that defines where they are and where they want to be. The community organizer must have a sense of humor. Humor gives the organizer a free and open mind to work with the people who are in opposition because of the change that is taking place.

The community organizer according to Alinsky must have a vision that is blurred. A blurred vision gives insight to not just one aspect of the community being authentic, but it provides insight into a community where humanity is a part of the whole. Blurred

¹⁶ Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*, (Vintage Books, New York, 1971) p. 3

vision says that all persons, organizers and community planners come together to work as a unit to bring about authentic community. A community organizer must be organized. An individual who is disorganized cannot handle the hustle and bustle of a chaotic situation. For an authentic community to be productive, the one organizing must be organized. "An organizer must become sensitive to everything that is happening around him. He is always learning, and every incident teaches him something."¹⁷

According to Alinsky,

One can lack any of the qualities of an organizer—with one exception—and still be efficient and fruitful. That exception is the art of communication. It does not matter what you know about anything if you cannot communicate to your people. In that event, you are not even a failure. You're just not there. Communication with others takes place when they understand what you're trying to get across to them. If they don't understand, then you not communicating regardless of words, pictures, or anything else. People only understand regarding their experience, which means that you must get within their experience. Further, communication is a two-way process. If you try to get your ideas across to others without paying attention to what they have to say to you, you can forget about the whole thing.¹⁸

In creating authentic community, there must be open lines of communication, and the dialogue cannot be one way. We have not experienced authentic community within the Huntingtown Charge or others like it because we have refused to have open communication with one another to at least understand where people are.

Alinsky's thought process or theory in building up and empowering the poor was to have them confront the systemic ills and issues that plagued the community in which they lived. Thus, he felt that if he could antagonize or provoke persons to become enemies of each other; then those individuals who were less empowered would fight for

¹⁷ Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. p. 77

¹⁸ Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. p. 81.

the rights and things of their community. The tactics that were used to empower the community was faced with opposition and seen as ideological at best. Many saw these tactics as only relevant in the urban community of the poor and weak. Alinsky states in *Rules for Radicals* that “One of the factions that changes what you can and can’t communicate is relationships. There are sensitive areas that one does not touch until there is a strong personal relationship based on common involvements. Otherwise, the other party turns off and literally does not hear, regardless of whether your words are within [his/or her] experience. Conversely, if you have a good relationship, [he/or she] is very receptive, and your “message” comes through in a positive context.”¹⁹

In our quest for an authentic community, there is a clear understanding that community is not just "I," but it the whole of creation bringing forth love and togetherness. Jim Lockard in his book *Creating the Beloved Community: A Handbook for Spiritual Leadership* defines Beloved Community in this way,

The Beloved Community is a collection of individuals who are learning how to love themselves, one another, and the universe. Regardless what name we give this idea, it is the same thing—the creation of the experience of belonging and experiencing the wonders of who we are individually and collectively. It is a place where purpose and passion meet, where we practice being the person we desire to be and support others in that effort.²⁰

Lockard gives us some keys as to how we can expand "Beloved Community," as well as those things that can cause communities not to develop. As we move to creating authentic community in a multi-point charge, there are some do's and don'ts that will help us and those that will keep us back. There are at least six things I want to point out that

¹⁹ Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. p. 93

²⁰ Jim Lockard, *Creating the Beloved Community: A Handbook for Spiritual Leadership*, (Oneness Books, 2017), p. 7

will help us to expand the authentic community. First, we must make a conscious effort to display a people possessing compassion when creating authentic community. The second thing is to make sure that we are people who know how to connect with other, and we genuinely love them. The third thing is that we must be sensitive to the individuals who are hurting and look for ways to heal. The fourth thing is that we must have a vision. Moreover, this image must reflect the course that we are going to take to move persons to the authentic or beloved community. The fifth and sixth keys to expanding authentic community are to make sure that we support each other mutually and that we are resilient in our quest for authentic or beloved community. Supporting each other will make for a stronger community; and being resilient helps us to struggle through those who are on the sidelines telling us that it will not work.

There are a few things that keep us from expanding community : (1) Our own developmental levels; (2) Our need for authority; (3) Our addiction to form; (4) Our limited skill sets; and (5) Our expectations. Lockard states

In other words, our humanness gets in the way. We come together as imperfectly actualized beings regarding the expression of our potential. Then, we try to grow spiritually in the company of others who mirror our imperfections back to us, triggering our negative patterns and bringing them to the surface. When we fail to see this, we may also fail to understand the fact that *The Beloved Community* unfolds AS us. Then we label what occurs as negative and resist it instead of seeing that it is a part of a process of growth.²¹

As Lockard describes the *Spiral Dynamics Model*, he helps us to understand that we are all on different levels and we all exhibit the behavior of those levels, but we are prone to lean toward our dominant group. Lockard uses colors to help us understand

²¹ Lockard, *Creating the Beloved Community*, p. 18

where we are in this model. The following colors are: beige which means we are instinctual or very simplistic; purple means we are tribal, communal, and ritualistic; red means that we are Egotistic, about ourselves and we are power hungry; blue means we are a traditionalist, communal, and we value institutions; orange means we are rational, scientific, and we like status; green means that we are egalitarian, communal, and we operate off our emotions; yellow means that we are very complex and to ourselves; and turquoise means that we are holistic, communal and spiritual.

“The Beloved Community is inclusive, but it must also be relational; people must be able to communicate deeply and connect mentally and emotionally. Such homogeneity or likeness is present. Diversity often presents some challenges to a group unless and until diversity becomes a valued concept and is extended to include everyone. Everyone has a vital and equal seat at the table. The levels in the Spiral Dynamics Model are best seen as “containers” for information and ideas. Each level of existence offers a different filtering system of interpretation. The values particular to each level determine how events are interpreted and constitute the worldview of those centered at that level.

Diversity is a challenging issue at every level of the 1st Tier, but especially at Traditionalist-Blue and below as there is a basic difficulty with acceptance of someone who is “other.” At Tribal-Purple, anyone not identified as a tribe or family member is suspect. As a Egotist-Red, everyone beyond the individual is continually suspect and being watched (the world is a jungle filled with dangers). The absolutist value system at Blue can make openness to people who are different in appearance and/or values challenging. Modernist-Orange is open to diversity but does not necessarily embrace differences. They are just willing to do business with or alongside them. It is at

Postmodern—Green where the celebration of diversity becomes a value—and where inclusion begins to be seen as a positive goal. But even at Green (which is still a fear-based level), there is often a reluctance to accept people who express values different than those of the in-group.

. In a community centered at Orange, there will be strong support for one another's personal growth, since Orange is an individualistic level (think of the 1980s ME Generation). However, away from the community, the personal life of those at Orange may be very segregated. It should be noted that Orange individuals are interested in status—how others see them—and one way to ensure your own status is to find ways to make others seem "less than" you or your group."²²

As we strive to create authentic community, we must understand that for this to take place, there must be education, communication, the awareness to belong to a group of people, and the propensity to turn the other way. We must also understand and realize that community, authentic community, or a beloved community is not about what we want, but it is about the whole of creation receiving justice and equal treatment as persons created in the image and likeness of God.

Conclusion

If building authentic community in a multi-point church is going to be a reality, then there will have to be a strong sense of compassion, love, hospitality, education, and communication within the body of Christ. If the community is going to grow and persons are going to become authentic in their relationships, then self-examination is evident. We

²² Lockard, *Creating the Beloved Community*. pp. 60-63.

cannot impact the broader community if we are not willing to self-examine and look at ways in which we can better ourselves first. To organize the community in the way that Saul Alinsky suggests means that we have to 1) commit ourselves to the education of that society. 2) listen to those persons who are in the community, and 3) make sure that the community is the primary reason we are reaching out and not to make ourselves look good in the process.

Eric Law and Jim Lockard help us to understand that in multicultural and beloved communities, we must show compassion one to the other and invite persons to become a part of the community. We must understand that authentic community works best when we encourage individuals to be a part of the overall community. Moreover, asking for volunteers or going around in circles does not lend itself to the authentic community because those who have the power seemingly keep it; while those with less power either have nothing to say or there is no opportunity.

In the Huntingtown Charge consisting of Patuxent and Plum Point United Methodist Churches, the congregation, for the most part, is a family-oriented church, and with individual families that hold power. Both churches are warm churches that will do outreach in the community but seemingly has struggled with working with each other to create an authentic community that will strengthen its ministry. We have begun to bring the two churches together to work on some ministries, and they have gone over very well.

Alinsky, Law, and Lockard emphasize the need for shared experiences. While Alinsky writes to persons who are looking to make significant changes within their community, Law and Lockard speak to individuals who are struggling with issues of power and being in control. What we seek to do in creating an authentic community in a

multi-point church is to give power to those who have less power and to help persons understand that authentic community happens when relationships take place.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The Huntingtown Charge consisting of Plum Point and Patuxent United Methodist Churches have been existence for over one hundred years. These two congregations are a part of Charge in The United Methodist denomination. “Multiple Charge Parishes are—intentionally organized group of two or more pastoral charges in which each church continues to relate to its charge conference on the organizational level and participates in a parish-wide council. The pastors are appointed or assigned to the charges and the parish, and a director or coordinator is appointed or assigned by the bishop.”¹ In the Huntingtown Charge the problem is the lack of authentic community or relationships between two churches with the same pastor. Over the years there has been a lack of support for ministry between the churches, therefore, resulting in division amongst the churches.

It is important to note that “creating authentic community through intentional hospitality in a multi-point church” has been in the making for well over four years. It was my intention as the pastor upon receiving this appointment to organize the two churches to do ministry together. There needed to be a sense of conventionalism

¹ The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, TN. The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) p. 146

amongst the congregations that would lead to others becoming a part of the community. Before I was able to put the project together, there were countless Bible Studies on togetherness, as well as sermon series that dealt with how we could work together as a charge. For authentic community to take place in these two churches, there must be an exchange of love and hospitality for one another. In this final chapter I provide specific suggestions for how to create authentic community through intentional hospitality, and I indicate where my context has aided or prevented that process.

The approach that is taken in this project to collect data is a qualitative research method. According to Patricia Leavy's *Research Design*,

Qualitative approaches to research value depth of meaning and people's subjective experiences and their meaning making process. These approaches allow us to build robust understanding of a topic, unpacking the meanings people ascribe to their lives—to activities, situations, circumstances, people, and objects. Methodologically, these approaches rely on inductive designs aimed at generating meaning and producing rich, descriptive data. Qualitative approaches are most commonly used in exploratory or descriptive research (although they can be used in research with other goals).²

The foundation of "Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church," especially as it pertains to the Huntingtown Charge, is that the two churches have been on a charge for several years and there has been some division that has caused them not to be in relationship with each other. Because we are a connectional church per our United Methodist Church, the need for a unified way of doing ministry is necessary for the two churches to grow within themselves and the Kingdom of God. Over the past six years, conversation has been had with many

² Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Art-based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2017: 124.

persons in the congregations pertaining to the lack of unity between the churches.

Through preaching and bible study, we have begun to work together in ministry and persons are seeing the need for authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge.

The thing that I can pinpoint that has brought persons together on the Huntingtown Charge is our joint bible study. It has been through bible study that persons from both congregations have had the opportunity to learn from each other and develop authentic community at the same time. An authentic community can only occur when there is a clear relationship with Jesus Christ, and the two congregations realize that real community happens when the love of Jesus Christ is present.

The approach taken to gather data for the project came from the use of surveys, focus group meetings, charge-wide community events, sermon series and bible studies. The reason for choosing these approaches was to give the congregations an idea of what “authentic community” looked like. The question that really moved us to authentic community was: What impact would we have on the community when we see ourselves as an authentic community intentionally working through hospitality to build the Kingdom of God? From this question sermon series and bible studies were developed to help us further our quest for authentic community.

As this project began to take shape, I had an opportunity to share my thoughts and visions with my context associates so that authentic community could be shared with everyone. It was in these meetings that we discussed and shared the nuances of ministry and the Huntingtown Charge over the past six years and before my arrival. It was in this meeting that I learned of instances where the two congregations to a certain degree were at odds with each other; therefore, leading to the division that took place. Persons were

not on one accord with ministry ideas and they ceased to worship together on the fifth Sunday's for a while.

As I have described in a previous chapter, the one thing that began this move toward authentic community was a sermon that I preached entitled "*Don't Just Stand There, Do Something.*" It was out of this sermon that our "When I Was and From the Heart" feeding ministries were born. Congregants at both churches saw the need to feed our seniors and those who were shut-in a hot meal every second and third Tuesday of the month. As we began working together in this ministry, many persons have been blessed throughout the community.

Another ministry that has grown from our quest for authentic community is our Huntingtown Charge Men's Choir. Due to the drop-in attendance on the men's choir at both churches, a seed was planted to talk about the two men groups coming together. This group was a vibrant group in years past, but for some reason they did not sing together as frequently as they once did. It was a desire for them to reunite, and almost a year later they have moved to a place where they worship and work together in authentic community.

The Six Steps in Authentic Community

Through these events and efforts, I began to see God move in a way that was leading me as the pastor and the congregations in "Creating Authentic Community" on the Huntingtown Charge first, and then reach the broader community. I must say that this has not been easy because there is always the threat to some of the churches merging.

My only concern for these two churches was that they would come together and do ministry in the name of Jesus. It has been through the “Creating Authentic Community” sermon series and bible studies that we have come to know and love our neighbors as we do ourselves.

As we “Create Authentic Community” on the Huntingtown Charge, we must understand that this ministry is not about big “I’s” and little “You’s.” Creating authentic community is not about an “us” and “them” mentality, but it is about us having a real, genuine, bonafide, and true relationship with God and each other. Before authentic community can be realized, there are six things that we must know.

Six Things to Know about Creating Authentic Community

1. **See the need.** Within the congregation and broader community, there is the growing need for persons to have a sense of belonging. All of us stand in need of the divine grace and love of God, and we are precious in the eyes of God.
2. **Engage persons.** One of the biggest mistakes that we make when trying to build or create community is that we make persons feel like “Lone Rangers.” We must engage persons in our congregations and community to let them know that they are not alone on this journey. We must remind persons that they are surrounded by the love of God found in Christ Jesus.
3. **Be Intentional.** We cannot afford to play with persons feelings or emotions when it comes to creating authentic community. We must be intentional in our hospitality and that hospitality should offer some

hope and peace for persons in the most difficult times of life. Being intentional says that we go out of our way to make sure that real community is realized.

4. **Learn to listen.** One of the hardest things for people to do is to listen.

I also believe that it is even more difficult in the church because we always want to add our two-cents. Learning to listen requires our undivided attention to the people seeking authentic community, and realizing that we do not have all the answers. Learning to listen also helps us to know that ministry occurs when we listen.

5. **Life is important.** The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church states that

The community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in individuals. Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important—because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance.³

Life is worth living, and even though we seek to get something out of life, we must give to life.

6. **Be Invitational.** In “Creating Authentic Community,” we must be invitational. Being willing to invite those to the table who may not look like us, smell like us, or live like us is key to creating authentic community. Regardless of race, status, or socio-economic situations,

³ The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, TN. The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) p. 108. (The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012) (Leavy 2017)

there must be an invitation to come. We must be reminded that Jesus invites us to the table despite of our past or background, therefore, it is up to us to be invitational.

Project Implementation

On February 18, 2017, we held our initial meeting for our Community Day event to be held April 29, 2017 at Patuxent UMC. It was at this initial meeting that members of the Huntingtown Charge came together in authentic community to strategize and plan out this event. Our second meeting provided us with an opportunity to talk about vendors, food, and games that would be held. This event was free and open to the public. It was the Huntingtown Charge's way of introducing authentic community to the broader community. At our third meeting we invited vendors, churches, and the community through letters telling them of the event. At the last meeting, plans were finalized, and we were ready to implement our first Community Day on the Huntingtown Charge.

The event proved itself to be very helpful in our quest to create authentic community in Calvert County. The first response I received at the event was from a member (Respondent #1) who stated: "Rev. Fleet we are ready to do this again next year." No follow-up surveys were done for this event, but we have once again held our second annual Huntingtown Charge Community Day. Through all the planning and implementation, we had a successful Community Day on April 21, 2018. There were well over twenty vendors and exhibits from how to take care of your teeth; to making plans for the final stages of life. We also had a time of fun with a moon bounce, face painting for the kids to corn hole for the adults. This event also provided safety

information from our Huntingtown Fire Department and the State of Maryland Police Department.

Per our survey, participants information gave us a better focus on how the event went and what things we could do better the next time (**see Appendix E**). The overall results from the twenty plus surveys filled out indicates that the information provided for Community Day was excellent and very well presented. Many of the persons that attended were very pleased with the exhibitors/vendors. Throughout this event the exhibitors/vendors and others were able to form new relationships through networking. Respondent#2 stated that this event provided “amazing customer service.”

There were some concerns or suggestions on how we could improve the Community Day: 1) Participants suggested that there be more exhibits outside to balance those on the inside. 2) Another concern was to have bigger parking, as well as using a bigger facility. 3) Participants suggested that there be a wider Calvert County involvement, especially those persons that live in the lower part of the county. 4) There was a suggestion that there be more presentations around substance abuse, domestic violence, teenage social networking, and exercise.

On January 31-March 5, 2018, we began a Sermon and Bible Study Series entitled “Creating Authentic Community.” The areas that were looked upon were: 1) Creating Authentic Community: Celebrating Community. This sermon and bible study dealt with how we worship together as community, especially authentic community. 2) The Connecting Community focused on how we connect with each other and those persons on the margins. 3) The Developing Community focused on how we develop disciples and ourselves. 4) The Serving Community focused on how well we serve each

other and the Lord. 5) The Contagious Community focused on the fact that we must become so close to others so that authentic community begins to rub off on others.

The method used to collect the data was Survey Monkey (see **Appendix C & D**). In analyzing the data, I looked at four to five questions for the trends that were being established. The consensus is that persons understand the need for “Creating Authentic Community,” and the information learned through the sermon series and bible study was extremely helpful in that understanding. Question 4 on the survey asked, “From the sermons and bible study, I feel that the Huntingtown Charge is fulfilling the mission and vision of an Authentic Community.” The response to this question was that persons slightly agreed at 57%. The results are in line with the understanding of authentic community on the Huntingtown Charge because there are still some areas and avenues that we need to work on so that we can fully embrace what it means to be an “authentic community.”

Question 10 asks persons to “Name three ways in which we can embrace Authentic Community.” The top three answers to this question was 1) more community outreach is needed 2) providing services and ministries to those persons/families that are in need and 3) getting to know our Huntingtown Charge members by working as a team to accomplish the goals of the church and be an authentic community.

Per my project calendar, the Youth Ministry Collaboration was initially to start May 12, 2017 with an invitation for youth from Plum Point and Patuxent to gather. This did not occur due to pastoral commitments and other events already in place. However, on February 19, 2018 we gathered as the Huntingtown Charge Youth for what I called “Pizza with the Pastor.” Our discussion focused around several questions that would help

us to understand what “authentic community” is and how we could come together to foster that concept. There were no surveys completed for this event, however, we used this time as a focus group and gave comments on the spot.

We had a total of ten youth present for this event and here are some of the questions that were asked: Question 1.) As youth, what is the meaning of authentic community? Respondent#3 stated that authentic community is a real group of people that works with each other and communicates and works to make a better place for Jesus.” Respondent#4 stated that authentic community is “a community that works together and lifts each other up.” Question 2.) What would it look like for the two youth groups to work together? Respondent#5 stated “I think it would be cool.” Respondent#6 stated “It would be a bigger group and we could do so much more in the church and community.” Respondent#7 stated “Proper communication and cooperation with both adults and youth would have to take place. There is hesitancy because of past experiences between both churches.” Question 3.) What are the reasons for not doing ministry together? Respondents#8 and 9 stated “We’re not under the same roof, therefore, it is somewhat hard to bring the two groups together.” Question 4.) What kind of impact would the youth have on the community if they worked together? Respondent#10 stated “A big impact, youth like to hear from other youth. We need more youth to help get more youth.”

The overall assessment of this meeting or focus group is that there is a need for the two youth groups to work together and plan ministry ideas. From this meeting the reality is that there are some past issues and experiences of communication between the adults at Plum Point and Patuxent that is hindering the youth from making the necessary

strides for “authentic community.” Our plan at this moment is to use creative ministry ideas to initiate our time together on a regular basis.

Our next event took place on March 23, 2018 at Patuxent UMC and it was entitled the Youth Creative Resources Expo. This expo was a collaborative effort between Calvert Collaborative for Children and Youth (3CY) and the Huntingtown Charge. Several organizations participated in this event and those youth that participated were asked two questions to initiate conversation: 1) What makes you special? 2) What are your sparks? There were 10 youth that participated, as well as 2 presenters. From the survey that was given, many of the youth were already participating in an activity to make constructive use of their time. For the most part, they were in a variety of activities from music to church which provides a balanced schedule. The results from this expo with youth revealed that many participants committed themselves to becoming involved in other activities, programs, etc. These activities include but are not limited to STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics), school, church, and community organizations, and other opportunities for leadership.

In my project proposal there was an event to be held entitled *The Healing and Restoration Workshop*. We did not get an opportunity to do this workshop because of pastoral and ministry engagements. As this is an ongoing ministry project, it is my hope and prayer that we will be able to conduct this workshop soon.

Summary of Findings

In Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church, we have learned that there must be relationships that are real, genuine, bonafide and valid. In an authentic community we must learn to love each other the way in which Jesus Christ loves us. The Bible reminds us in Matthew 22:34-40 taken from the New Revised Standard Version of these words,

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37 He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In an authentic community, we are called to love God with all that we have and are; and we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We also learned that for an authentic community to be lived out on the Huntingtown Charge, there must be shared ministry with persons working together in community, and our hospitality must be intentional in nature. In other words, we must go out of our way to make sure that persons within the Huntingtown Charge and the broader community sense the power and present of God. We have also learned through this process that we cannot focus on what we want as the Huntingtown Charge, but we must also be aware of our surrounding community and the needs that are before them.

Through our Community Day event, we have come to learn that there are many people in our churches and community that are not aware of the services provided in the Calvert County area. It has been through this event that the Huntingtown Charge has provided excellent service to persons in the community and we have vowed to do this

event free of charge. Not only has this event given the Huntingtown Charge a chance to be of service, but it has afforded us the opportunity to network with other agencies in and around the Calvert County area.

We learned through our Sermon Series and Bible Study that there are some areas of ministry that we have begun to create authentic community. It has been through the “When I Was Ministry” and “From the Heart” feeding ministry that we are working and serving together so that others in our community might have hot meals. Through the teaching on authentic community in Bible Study, we have formed greater relationships with each other and we are seeking ways to further those relationships. We have learned that much like a person who has a cold or flu, authentic community must be contagious in nature and we cannot afford not to share real, genuine relationship with those that are around us. We’ve learned that even though the sermon series and bible study on Creating Authentic Community has ended, we have embraced the fact that authentic community is an ongoing lifestyle on the Huntingtown Charge and beyond.

In looking at the data from the sermon series and bible study, 57% of those who took the survey stated that they slightly agreed with the fact that we are fulfilling our mission and vision of creating authentic community. However, 50% of participants say that they are provided opportunities to live in or engage in Authentic Community. There has been spiritual growth that has taken place because of the preaching and teaching on Creating Authentic Community as presented in our survey. Over 60% of the participants agreed that they have or are growing spiritually, and leaders are emerging from the study.

In our focus group with our youth, we learned that there is a willingness to do youth ministry together. There is a need to do ministry together because it would give

the youth more persons to work with, and they will be able to make a broader impact on the community. The hesitancy around coming together as the Huntingtown Charge Youth is a lack of communication and cooperation with the adults of both churches, which in turn has filtered down to the youth group. Because of past experiences and lack of unity within the churches, persons have been reluctant to join as one group. Therefore, as stated in my proposal and project overview, the need for the youth groups to work together so that they could attend the ROCK Youth Retreat in Ocean City did not occur.

Upon entering the Doctor of Ministry program, the context known as the Huntingtown Charge displayed signs of disunity amongst each other which prohibited them from working together as a Charge. Through bible study, sermons, and intentionally working together, the lack of unity has begun to disappear. It must be noted that even though there are signs of unity amongst the two churches, there is still more work that must be done to bring together greater participation on the Huntingtown Charge. The hypothesis statement read as follows: “if members of the multi-point charge would work together in ministry, then authentic community would take place.” As I view this statement and consider the work we have done to create authentic community through intentional hospitality in a multi-point church, I would say that the events have helped to support my hypothesis.

When I look at Community Day, I recall mentioning it as one of our events for the upcoming year. It was at the calendar planning meeting that we decided to offer this outreach ministry. As we began to plan the event, it was clear that this was not an event to be done by one church, but it was to be a Huntingtown Charge event. Even though there were some persons who tried to make it a “one church event”, through leadership

and persistency, this event became a success. This is just one example of the Huntingtown Charge working together to do ministry and creating an authentic community while doing it.

Recommendations Towards a Model of Authentic Community

In conclusion, this project helped the Huntingtown Charge to live in an authentic community as a multi-point charge, but it will benefit other churches on multi-point/multi-site ministries live out authentic community. For an authentic community to exist on the Huntingtown Charge, there must be an exchange of love and intentional hospitality toward one another. As stated in my Biblical Foundations paper, the two passages of scripture chosen to depict authentic community are Psalm 133 and Acts 2:42-47.

Psalm 133 reminds us that pleasant things begin to happen within the family, kindred or community when congregants come together in unity. When we are united with one another, we experience the blessings of God flowing upon us like the oil flowing down the head of Aaron. As we dwell or live together in unity, as leaders and disciples of Jesus Christ leading by example, we should witness the blessing of God on everyone in the community. Our goal is to live with God forever, but we must use our living with one another here on earth as our training ground. It is impossible for us to live and reign with God forever, especially if we cannot live amongst each other.

The New Testament passage taken from Acts 2:42-47 speaks of how the early church adopted spiritual disciplines to lead others to Christ and build community. As we continue to create authentic community through intentional hospitality on the

Huntingtown Charge, we must pattern our lives after the early church and implement the characteristics of community that is authentic, real, and true in its love, praise, and community outreach.

Therefore, the Sermon Series and Bible Study entitled *Creating Authentic Community* brought to light how we can achieve this type of community (see Appendix A and B). The Sermon Series and Bible Study complimented one another, in other words what was being taught or preached on Sunday was also expounded upon on Wednesdays and further expanded for better clarity. We began this series with our focus on worship. It was in this sermon and study that we learned that our celebration in worship must be authentic, real, and true so that others might enter the worship experience as a part of the community. We learned in worship that when we come together in authentic community that our worship must have meaning and understanding.

The second week we focused on the *Connecting Community* where we learned that unless we connect with each other and God, our relationships with each other will not grow. We learned that there is nothing that can separate us if we are connected to Jesus Christ. In the third week our focus was on *Developing Community*, and as such our task was to create dynamic disciples. Dynamic disciples have no problem sharing, witnessing, and living out the Word of God. They are moved to do so because of their commitment and love for growth in the Kingdom of God. The fourth week our focus was on being the *Serving Community*. We learned that to serve means that we work for or render service to someone. It is here that we learned that we must have regard for, devotion to, and interest in others. In an authentic community, our work for Jesus is not finished if we have not made a positive impact on the people we are serving. We learned

that the service we give ought to make a difference in the lives we seek to touch. The fifth week we focused on being the *Contagious Community*. We learned that being a contagious community means that we must spread the love of Jesus Christ to everyone we meet. We learned that in an authentic community you must infect persons with the real, true, and genuine love of Jesus Christ.

Creating Authentic Community: Six Things to Do

While going through the data, I have identified six things to do to create an authentic community. These six things are from our surveys taken on events from January 2018-April 2018.

1. **Stay focused.** Always remain in prayer. In an authentic community prayer is key to unlocking the path we are trying to take. We must remain focused on keeping our attention on acknowledging our love for Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:42-47, the persons who gathered to hear the apostles started first with prayer. If we are going to create authentic communities, then our first step is prayer.
2. **Fulfill the need.** In every community there is a need. There are persons who are hungry, homeless, sick and shut-in, and feeling as if life is not worth living. Or better yet, they feel as if there is no hope for their situation. Therefore, in an authentic community, we must provide those services to people and families that will meet the everyday need. Without meeting the physical need of people, we cannot expect to meet the spiritual. As we meet

the need, we cannot take an “us” and “them” attitude or position. We must be intentional in our hospitality and not look at it as charity. Fulfilling the need means that we are going out of our way to make the community and lives of others better.

3. **Connect with the community.** When it comes to community, our connections are very important. In an authentic community, we must be real about the connections we are trying to make within and outside of the church walls. We must step outside of our comfort zones and see the potential there is in connecting with persons we do not know. A part of connecting with others is the fact that we learn about who they are and what ideas and beliefs that they bring to enhance the community. As we learn about their beliefs and values, we will in turn learn something different that would be beneficial to us on the Huntingtown Charge. Recently, as I talked with a parishioner and his wife, I learned of ways that ministry can be done by connecting with people in the community who may not have church affiliations, but because they want to fulfill the need they connect with others to make that happen.
4. **Be invitational.** C. Anthony Hunt in his book *Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* states that “Developing peaceful community involves a willingness to accept the invitation that Christ extends to us, as well as inviting others—those who may in some way be unlike us—into dialogue and relationship. Community is the reality where persons can be themselves and have the same value as their neighbor. It is a safe reality, an inclusive reality

where peace (shalom) prevails.”⁴ As we create an authentic community through intentional hospitality, we must be invitational. We must be reminded that Jesus Christ extended an invitation to us when we were outside of the community, and that invitation was not based upon our race, background, or socio-economic status. One way in which we can be authentic in community is to enter into dialogue with those in the community and listen for ways in which we can be authentic or real.

5. **Be Intentional.** In our quest to create an authentic community, there must be the willingness of all parties involved to be intentional. According to Webster’s Dictionary, intentional means “done deliberately.”⁵ The love, kindness, the sharing, the connecting and the developing must be deliberate so that authentic community is realized. As stated earlier, the early church in Acts 2:42-47 had a clear understanding of what it meant to be intentional with their hospitality. Through their fellowship and sense of what community was all about, their shared what they had with others, this included those material and spiritual gifts. As we seek to live in and live out authentic community, we must be intentional about teaching, helping and praying for those who are on the Huntingtown Charge, as well as those with whom we will interact with in the margins. We must also have a clear understanding of other faith groups and religions so that we are a diverse and culturally relevant community.

⁴ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Lima, Ohio, Wyndham Hall Press, 2005) p. 202.

6. **Become partners.** In Acts 2:42-47, it states that the people shared what they had. In other words, they partnered with those in the church community so that the ministry would be beneficial to everyone in the community. As we have learned through our Community Day event, the bringing together of resources on the Huntingtown Charge has led to our partnerships in the broader community. In creating an authentic community, it is not imperative that we come up with all the ideas, but we must be willing to partner with those in other churches and civic arenas so that ministry is done on a broader level. An example of an authentic community was experienced with our Lenten Cluster this year. We partnered with one of the cluster churches to provide food, transportation, and monitoring for our homeless ministry in Calvert County for an event called Safe Nights. Through this endeavor, we were able to have persons staffed for the times that monitoring needed to take place, and it was not a problem with who was hosting the event. Becoming partners with others is an important way to network and become involved in other ministries in the community.

Conclusion

To Create Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church, one must be clear about the end goal. The end goal must be to unite the two churches in the case in a way that they are intentional about working in ministry together. One must also be clear that not every event or ministry that is done together will be a complete success. One must also understand that doing one or two events does not suggest that you have created an authentic community. Creating authentic community is an ongoing process and it cannot be fully accomplished until all persons have a seat at the proverbial table.

What I have discovered in doing this project is that you must be intentional and invitational so that authentic community can be achieved. As I look at the “Six Things to Know” and “Six Things to Do,” I see these as recommendations to help in “Creating Authentic Community.” The one thing that I had to make clear when I began this process was not to confuse being connectional with merging churches. The other thing that I have been mindful in this process is not to diminish the identity of the churches. I have been very clear that even though I pastor a two-point charge, each of these churches have their own identity and culture.

While there are persons on the Huntingtown Charge who have caught hold of the vision to create authentic community, there are those who are hesitant of joining in because it might challenge their power structure, or it will cause them to see that the only way we can live together is in unity. The goal of creating authentic community is to make sure that those on the margins within the church and outside of the church have a seat and voice at the table. And so, the question remains, “What would happen if we

committed ourselves to a loving, intentional community of hospitality on the Huntingtown Charge?” “What would happen if we began to live our lives by Acts 2:42-47?” Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality means that we are willing to share what we have, pray for one another and the community, and attend to the teachings of Christ and then go into the margins to engage and walk along those who are seeking.

The other event or recommendation that I would make is to have a time of healing, reconciliation and restoration between the churches. Even though I did not implement the workshop as proposed, I can say that it will be looked upon in the future. When two churches have division and animosity amongst them, there needs to be a time of healing and reconciliation that takes place. While this may open old wounds and past hurts, the need for this kind of workshop is important so that persons can voice their concerns and healing can take place. I would recommend that an outside person is brought in to conduct this type of workshop. A neutral person has the tendency to be unbiased in their comments and suggestions and there is no tension or hostility felt toward the presenter.

Be open for God to move

In creating authentic community, we must remain open to the movement of the Holy Spirit and given room for God to bring you those unexpected surprises. As we have heard about authentic community, and we have done events to display authentic community, we now must open ourselves to the movement of the Spirit of God to open doors of ministry that will help us to encourage authentic community. One area that has

presented itself in our ongoing ministry of creating authentic community is a fresh ministry expression entitled *Dinner Church*.

It is through *Dinner Church* that we engage those in the community who are living on the margins and invite them into the church for a time of food, fellowship and faith. This concept will allow persons to be open about their faith and give them an opportunity to be real in community in a way that would not otherwise be offered. God is beginning to move in this endeavor, and one of the couples in the church is willing to lead the ministry. Another expression of ministry that is on the horizon is the bringing together of our Youth Ministry. The youth counselors are looking at ways that will help the youth to be real and authentic about their commitment to ministry and our prayer is that they will impact the community for Jesus Christ.

The thing that I would do differently is to provide more opportunities for ministry to be done. As such, congregants can see that being in a connectional system provides resources that otherwise would not be in place. Because we are a part of a connectional system in the United Methodist Church, it is important that we work together to make the connect strong and viable. Authentic community is obtainable, but one must be willing to teach, preach, be an example, and not give up on the journey. Realizing that pitfalls and roadblocks will be around, the goal of creating authentic community the way in which the early church and Jesus commands is worth the struggle.

The best advice that I have to offer to those who are looking to create authentic community in their ministry setting is to 1) Make sure that you feel the heartbreak within your ministry context. 2) Do not offer what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls “cheap grace” to those you are trying to connect within the congregation. In an authentic community we

should be willing to suffer and even die for what we desire the community to look like. 3) Authentic community is built through our relationships with one another. 4) Participation and engagement in community is essential. 5) There should be a connection to the community. 6) We must show the agape love of Jesus Christ if we want to create authentic community.

Remember that God is a God of inclusivity and if authentic community is to be gained or lived out, then God must be at the very heart of what we do. Authentic community allows persons to be free in their humanness and in expressing their views and values. We must constantly revisit our commitment to be inclusive and compassionate along with being responsible and accountable.

APPENDIX A

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church
Bible Study Lesson 1: The Celebrating Community

Scriptures for Reading

Psalm 100; 1 Chronicles 13:1-8; Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 133

1. What is your definition of “Beloved Community?” What is your definition of “authentic” and what makes community authentic?
2. How do we move from “making members” for the church to “making disciples” of Christ?
3. What is your understanding of “worship?” What does worship seek to do?”
4. According to Psalm 100, what do we know about worship?
5. According to Acts 2:46-47, how did the people praise God? In an authentic community, what will it take for us to experience “real” community?
6. According to Psalm 133, what is the blessing that the psalmist declares we will have? How important is that blessing to having authentic community?
7. Through authentic community, how can we assure that our worship is of benefit to everyone who attends?

Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church
Bible Study Lesson 2: The Connecting Community

Scriptures for Reading

Romans 15:1-7; Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 12:46-50

1. As the Church of Jesus Christ, how well do we connect with each other? How well do we connect with the community?
2. What does the word connect mean when it comes to “authentic community”?
3. Where do we see ourselves connecting with each other? What is your definition of “intentional hospitality?”
4. According to Paul in Romans 15:1-7, he states that we ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. In our connecting, do we see what others are going through?

5. According to Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus talks about who is his mother, brothers, and sisters. In an authentic community, where do we see our mothers, brothers, and sisters?
6. According to Acts 2:44, the people had all things in common. In this authentic community, what will it take for us to have all things in common?
7. What do we need to ensure that we are enacting the “authentic community”? What does being intentional about hospitality in our church setting do for us?
8. How can we show “intentional hospitality” toward each other on the Huntingtown Charge?

Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church
Bible Study Lesson 3: The Developing Community

Scriptures for Reading

Romans 12:1-12; Acts 2:42-47

1. As the Church of Jesus Christ, how well do we develop each other? How well do we develop the community called the Huntingtown Charge?
2. What does the word develop mean when it comes to “authentic community”?
3. Where do we see ourselves developing each other?
4. According to Paul in Romans 12:1-2, he states that we must change our minds or be renewed in our minds. How do we as an authentic community develop ourselves to make sure that our minds are renewed, and we are living out community the way God wants?
5. According to Acts 2:42-46 they committed themselves to the teachings of the apostles, what would it look like if we committed ourselves to the teachings of Jesus Christ as passed down through the pastor and leaders? What would we gain from being an “authentic” community?
6. According to Dr. King, there were three components that were essential to the Beloved Community. They were reconciliation, freedom, and hope. As the Huntingtown Charge, where do we see ourselves in these three components?

7. What are the benefits of learning in community? What are the benefits of the Huntingtown Charge learning in community?
8. Christ is always about content and relationship. How can we develop persons in our community that will change us on the inside to reflect the outside?

Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church
Bible Study Lesson 4: The Serving Community

Scriptures for Reading

Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

1. As the Church of Jesus Christ, how well do we serve each other? How well do we serve the community called the Huntingtown Charge?
2. What does the word service mean when it comes to “authentic community”?
3. Where do we see ourselves serving and what life changing experience have we had? How does this translate to us being in “authentic community?”
4. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7, all our gifts are important to the body of Christ and the building up of community. What difference does service play in our community and what impact will it make on us being the “authentic community?”
5. According to Acts 2:44-45 the people met together constantly and shared everything they had, selling their possessions and dividing with those in need. Where are we willing to serve as the “authentic community” in order that lives are changed not only in the Huntingtown Charge, but in the community?
6. When we take a risk to do mission and service, what should happen to us as a result? What should we be aware of as we embark upon a life of service?
7. How do we offer a ministry of compassion, mercy, and justice in the community known as the Huntingtown Charge? As the “authentic community,” are we intentional about being compassionate, merciful, and just to the people we encounter each day?

8. As the “authentic community,” what are three bold and risky ways in which we can serve the community?

Creating Authentic Community Through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church
Bible Study Lesson 5: The Contagious Community

Scriptures for Reading

Acts 2:42-47; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 28:16-20

1. What is the mission of the church? In an authentic community, what would be our mission field?
2. How contagious are we willing to be as an “authentic community?”
3. What role does the Holy Spirit play in us being the “authentic community?” According to Joel 2:28-32, on whom does the Spirit fall?
4. What would we need to do in our community called the Huntingtown Charge to ensure that souls are added to our numbers daily?
5. According to Matthew 28:16-20 in which we call the Great Commission, Jesus tells us that we have authority and we are to make disciples of all nations. What would happen if our worship, service, development, and connecting with each other became contagious?
6. “Authentic Community” means that we are real, genuine, bona fide and true in our witness. What does “authentic community” look like on the Huntingtown Charge? Where is Jesus calling us to go so that disciples are made?

APPENDIX B

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY SERMON SERIES

Creating Authentic Community Part 1: The Celebrating Community
Scripture Psalm 100; 1 Chronicles 13:1-8; Acts 2:42-47

Introduction

For the next several weeks we will explore the topic “Creating Authentic Community,” and we will come to understand what it means to be in community with one another, and how we can impact our ministry as the Huntingtown Charge, as well as the world. As we look at this word community, Dr. King defines it as follow, “That seemingly elementary decision set in motion what we know now as civilization. At the heart of all that civilization has meant and developed is “community”—the mutually cooperative and voluntary venture of man to assume a semblance of responsibility for his brother.” The dictionary defines community as a social group whose members live in a specific locality, share government, and have a common heritage. Community is the “common union” of persons who have shared beliefs and values.

Dr. King was in search of what is called the “Beloved Community,” and he defines “Beloved Community this way, “a transformed and regenerated human society.” Therefore, King saw Beloved Community as “an integrated society wherein unity would be an actuality in every aspect of social life.” For our purposes of ministry and living out community on our Charge, I want us to consider the term “Authentic Community.” The word authentic means factually accurate or reliable; to be genuine or real. In other words, the word “authentic” means to be true, bona ride, legitimate, legal, lawful, valid, the real McCoy, the real thing, kosher. Therefore, when we look at “creating authentic community,” we are recognizing the fact that we are to be true, real, genuine, or kosher in our relationship with God and one another. Authentic community is not about us, but it is about our relationship and responsibilities as our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

As we look at the first part of our Sermon Series “Creating Authentic Community,” we want to concentrate on being a Celebrating Community. We all like to celebrate, and if given the chance we would celebrate any and everything that we could. We celebrate birthdays, Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, July Fourth, and all other days that we think need to be celebrated. Celebration is a part of who we are, and God wants us to celebrate Him every chance we get.

Each Sunday as we enter these doors for worship, we ought to enter with celebration in our hearts and on our lips. Each day that we wake up, we ought to have a celebratory response to what God continues to do for us. We must understand that as individuals and the community, we were created to worship and celebrate God. Despite how we feel, we should worship and celebrate God because of who God is in our lives. This morning I have three points that I want to make as it pertains to a Celebrating Community. The first point is “A Celebrating Community worships with passion. The second point is that “A Celebrating Community worships with joy. The third point is “A Celebrating Community” worships with understanding.

I. A Celebrating Community Worships with Passion

How many of us gathered in this place this morning knows what their passion is? How many of you here can say without a shadow of a doubt that you truly know what God has called you to do and you don't mind doing it to the best of your abilities? The word passion means that you have intense enthusiasm for something; you have keen interest in a subject or activity. When we think of passion, we are reminded that it is the one thing that gets our attention the most. When we are passionate about something, there is no one on earth that can turn us around from doing that thing. We seem to have a genuine love for what we are doing, and we don't mind letting others know that this is the one thing that we love. In an authentic community, we ought to be passionate about loving each other and loving and worshiping the God that created us.

Therefore, if we truly say that we love the Lord, and we are truly the children of the Most High God, then our praise and worship should reflect it. The beginning of Psalm 100 states that we should make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; we should worship the Lord with gladness. Our worship should not be a pump and prime session; we should not have to be told to get up and make some noise; but we should come together in authentic community and give God the praise and worship God deserves. In authentic community, the Celebrating community worships with passion, and it is not about who has the best choir or who can out sing who, but it is about us corporately worshiping God out of our passion for God.

Psalm 150 reminds us that we ought to praise and adore God with everything that we have; if you are breathing the air that God has provided, and you are enjoying the air you breathe, then you ought to be able to give God praise. Because I love and adore God, I will bless the Lord at all times; God's praises shall continually be in my mouth. In an authentic community, people should see our love for God through Jesus Christ and should not have to wonder whether or not we are passionate about God. We should not even have to tell them that we are Christians; they will know that we are Christian by our love.

In an authentic community of worship, the atmosphere should be so charged with the power of God that persons, who come in one way, should leave with the sense of community and love. Persons who enter the presence of God in an authentic community should not leave the same way that they came in. Our passion for worship and our passion for God help to transform the community. And because we are a celebrating community that worships with passion, we should be a celebrating community that worships with joy.

II. A Celebrating Community Worships with Joy

Most of the celebrations that I have attended in my life have been filled with joy. The fact that the people who were celebrating were excited about the event and had determined in their heart and mind that they were going to enjoy themselves. For those of us who are in Christ Jesus, we don't have time to be happy. Well what do you mean by that pastor. We don't have time to be happy because the world and all of its devices contradict what we believe and stand for. Let me see if I can put it to you in this way, a celebrating community worships with joy because they understand that their strength in God is coming from joy in God. When we speak of persons being happy, we are saying that people are just fine today, but the moment something doesn't go their way, they are upset and mad. Joy reminds us that we are excited no matter what the situation is in your life.

The definition of joy is the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something good or satisfying; a source of keen pleasure or delight. We often say that "this joy I have the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away." In an authentic, celebrating community, joy means that we experience a peace and love for God and life that we would cannot explain. I like to explain to people that JOY is really Jesus on You. Our worship should be full of celebration that the joy of the Lord is on each person. No one should have to wonder whether or not you love God because the joy of the Lord is your strength. Even in the most trying of times, the joy of the Lord should be in and about you.

A celebrating community worships with joy in their hearts. Our praise and worship should be so joyful and uplifting that persons in community meet God where they are. No matter what the week has brought you; how folk have treated you, our worship ought to be so joyful that people feel the presence of God and forget about what is going on in their lives and worship God. In 1 Chronicles 13:1-8, the Bible tells us that David and the rest of the Israelites were moving the Ark of the Covenant of God from one place to another. Now you must understand that the Ark of the Covenant contained many of the elements used in Israelite worship; the Ten Commandments, Aaron's Rod that budded.

Once they got to the place where the Ark should be, they began to celebrate, they began to worship the Lord with gladness; they began to sing and dance with joy because the Ark of the Covenant was back in the place where it should have been. They could experience the presence of God once again. The Bible says in verse eight of that 13th chapter that David and the rest of the Israelites began to praise God joyously for all that God had done in their lives. When we come into the presence of God, we should come passionate, and we should come with joy and thanksgiving for all that God continues to do; but we should also come Celebrating Worship with Understanding.

III. A Celebrating Community Worships with Understanding

How many of us have done some things in our lives and we didn't understand why we did it? We all do some things that we clearly do not understand why it is that we do what

we do. Many of us do things out of habit or we do it because it has always been done that way and this is the way must be the right way. The person who continues to lie does not realize in many instances that they are lying because they have told so many lies that the lies now have become truth to them.

As a celebrating Community when we come into worship on Sunday morning and even in our private times of worship, we want to give God a little dab will do you because we figure that what we call worship is truly worship. Or perhaps we want to shout all day long because for some odd reason we believe that we should stay in church all day long because that is what is God wants. Our worship should have understanding and meaning; we are not here as entertainers on a stage, but we are here to lift up and magnify the name of the Lord.

As an authentic community and a celebrating community, we must understand that the focus should not be on us, but on God. In verse 3 of Psalm 100 it tells us that we should know and understand that God is God. God made us, and we belong to God; we are the people of God and we live in the pastures of God. When we enter the house of God, we should enter knowing that God has blessed us and our gratitude for those blessing is hearty THANK YOU!!! Our worship and celebration should be beneficial and done in unity to those who are coming to receive from the Lord.

As a celebrating community our worship should be authentic and not manufactured. Worship is not Show Time at the Apollo; neither is it our chance to demo for our CD, but it is time for us to relate to others what God wants out of worship. Worship is the time for us to come together on one accord and give God the honor and glory that is due unto Him. Worship is the time when we come and say thanks to God because God has been just that God. As a matter of fact, God has been better to us than we have been to ourselves. In authentic community we are to hold each other accountable, as well as tending to the needs of the community.

If we are looking for our churches to grow numerically and spiritually, then we are going to have to come together in authentic community and worship God on one accord. As the Huntingtown Charge, we must come together in love and unity with each other and declare that as a community we will celebrate God with purpose. In Acts 2:46-47 it states that the people came together daily in the temple on one accord; fellowshiping from house to house, worshipping God and God added to their numbers daily. Our worship experience whether private or corporate must have passion, joy, and most of all understanding.

As we enter these gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and his courts with praise, we should come to understand the reason why we worship. The reason why we worship is because God is worth it. The reason why we praise is because God continues to bless us every day of our lives. The reason why we ought to be passionate, joyful, and have meaning and understanding is because Jesus Christ hung, bled and died just so that we could have a right to eternal life. Let me break it down to you just like this, hung, bled,

died, and rose again so that you and I could celebrate in authentic community. Authentic community is community that is real, genuine, bona fide, and true. Amen.

Creating Authentic Community Pt. 2: The Connecting Community
Scripture Matthew 12:46-50; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 15:1-7

Introduction

This morning I want to start this sermon off in a different way. I know we have already welcomed our guests, and we have already given each other hugs, handshakes, smiles, and waves, but before we really delve into the Word of God, I want you to tell the person sitting next to you or around you something they do not know about you. Now if you belong to the same family, which most of you do, then I want you to go to somebody that you may not normally go to and tell them something about you. (Please take about two minutes).

Here on the Huntingtown Charge, our motto is “Each 1 Reach 1 for Jesus.” Our Mission Statement says “The Mission of the Huntingtown Charge is to make disciples of Jesus Christ through worship, word, and witness.” Our Vision Statement says “The Huntingtown Charge is a place where disciples are made; lives are developed and hope is built through love and acceptance in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Last week we preached from the first part of this series and we learned that our worship should be celebratory. When we come to worship, we should come with some passion because we should be intensely enthusiastic about what God is doing and we cannot stop lifting up the name of Jesus. We also came to understand that we ought to celebrate as a community with some joy. We should have what I like to call JESUS ON YOU. We learned that the Joy of the Lord is our strength and when we worship, we ought to be excited. Then we learned that our worship must have meaning and understanding. In order for others to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our worship should offer them healing, deliverance, and transformation.

As we approach the second part of this sermon series, I want us to take an adventure with me that allows us to see ourselves connecting with one another. As an “authentic community,” we should see ourselves being in relationship with those persons who are on the outside looking in. As a matter of fact, I want us to forget about inviting them to church, but I want us to focus our attention on inviting them into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever we connect something, it is all about relationships. The word connect means to link or join two or more parts, things, or people; to have a good rapport with somebody; to make a psychological or emotional association between people, things, or events.

As an “authentic community,” our connections come in all shapes, forms, and ways, and we should not be afraid as believers in Jesus Christ to connect ourselves with others. Persons with whom we may come in contact with in many cases will not be like us.

There will be persons who will not look the way in which we want them to look; they will not walk or talk the way we want them to; they will not live the way we want them to. Regardless of what we see, our connections must be genuine and real. Jesus reminds us that when we encounter someone that is not of our circle, we should invite them in and connect with them. The second part of Creating Authentic Community is about us being “The Connecting Community.” In connecting with others, we establish meaningful relationships.

If we are going to celebrate God in our worship, then we must be willing to build healthy relationships with each other and those who will come through the doors of the church. In order for us to be a connecting “authentic community,” we must check our relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, what do you mean pastor? I am glad you asked the question, because I have an answer. We have to be connected with the Lord Jesus Christ before we can authentically connect with others. Our connections with God begins with our connections to God’s Word. When we begin to sit down and learn what the Word of God has to say to us then we begin to connect our lives with the life of God and our relationships take on meaning and purpose. There are three things that I want to leave with you about “The Connecting Community.” The first thing that a “Connecting Community does is grow deeper”. The second thing a “Connecting Community does is grow wider.” The third thing a “Connecting Community does is grow further.”

I. A Connecting Community Grows Deeper

How many of us truly want to grow deeper in our relationship with the Lord? Or how many of us are content with the relationship that we have and we don’t mind staying the way we are? Or how many of us have a relationship at all with the Lord Jesus Christ? All of us fall into one of these three categories; we are either looking to grow deeper; we are not looking to grow at all; or we don’t really care if we have a relationship at all with Jesus Christ.

I have come to realize that if we are going to connect with other people, then we must have purposed in our hearts that we are going to grow deeper. Now understand that deeper does not mean that we get all spooky and begin to quote Genesis to Revelation to the person, but it means that you take the time to really get to know who that person is and you share who you are with them. In Romans 15:1-7, Paul tells us that we ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. When we help the hurt away in people’s lives, we are not doing it so that we look good or our stars become more and more because we have done a good deed. But we are doing it because we love the person we are helping; they are children of God; and they are hurting from the pains and cares of the world.

Too many times we want to pat ourselves on the back and say to others, look what I have done. But if we are going to grow deeper in our relationships with Jesus Christ and others, then we must forget about what we want, and concentrate on the fact that we are here as instruments of God to help somebody through a hard situation. The more we become genuinely concerned about the welfare of others, the stronger and deeper our relationships will grow. The one thing we must understand is this; our first step to

becoming deeper and stronger is our connection with Jesus Christ and Christ being first in our lives. We must have an encounter with Jesus Christ before we can encounter our relationships with meaning and purpose. Zan Holmes in his book *Encountering Jesus*, says that our encounters ought to count. Our first encounter should be with the Lord Jesus Christ, and everything that we do should lead us to a place where we experience and encounter the love of Jesus.

Deeper- a healthy church ministry creates time, opportunity and space for believers to have deep fellowship with one another. Coffee hour creates acquaintances, but unless we provide other ministries that allow time and space for people to get to know one another's joys, pain, hope and life, we are not allowing for deep and meaningful relationships.

II. A Connecting Community Grows Wider

All of us, if we really sit down and think about our lives and our relationships we want to grow. Many of us do not want to stay the same; we want to experience something that is fresh and new in our lives. We want to be different, but in many instance we just don't know how to go about doing that. A healthy, authentic connection is not only made as we grow deeper, but it is also made as we grow wider. Just think of how some of us have grown over the years. When I look at myself now and compare it to my younger days, I can truly say that I have grown a bit wider.

While on the other hand many of us have grown from being positive people to being the most negative people you ever wanted to meet. Then on the other hand many of us have traded in our pain, hurt, and sorrow for some joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. However, we want to look at our growth process, we can all say that something or someone has influenced a change in our lives. If we are going to grow wider as the body of Christ then we are going to have to meet some new people. We are going to have to meet some people who do not particularly fit our mold.

There are some alcoholics that need to know that Jesus Christ loves them, and in an authentic community that is a connecting community, we are called to love. That mother who is having a hard time making ends meet needs to know that we are here and we are ready to connect with her to make her life better. We must understand that Jesus made healthy connections because he did not hang out with the same old people. Jesus hung out with the outcasts of society so that we might understand that we have to go after the least, the last, and the lost.

In Matthew 12:46-50, there was a discussion about who was Jesus' mother, brothers, and sisters because the disciples had informed him that they were there to see him. What Jesus in turn told them was that those who are willing to do the will of my Father are considered to be my mothers, brothers, and sisters. Let me see if I can break it to you like this, if we are going to be a connecting community that is authentic, then we will have to open wide our circle and be prepared to welcome the stranger in. We cannot be so comfortable with our family church that no one is accepted into our community.

Growing wider means that we are open to everyone becoming a part of our community and experiencing the love of Jesus Christ.

As an authentic community we can only grow wider when we change our approach to the way we deal with relationships. We have to realize that everyone that comes in our church may not be our biological family, but they are a part of our spiritual family, and they want to experience an authentic community that loves Jesus and is willing to share the healing, saving power of the savior.

Wider-congregations tend to attract people like themselves. Let's face it. It's easier. It is hard work to nurture relationships with people who are different than us. Jesus was always seeking to be in relationship with those that were different than himself. The initial twelve are study in contrasts. It was hard work. Painful at times yet truly modeling of what the kingdom of God looks like.

III. A Connecting Community Grows Further

For many of us we don't mind doing the first two things in order to make healthy connections, but it is the third one that we have a problem with. We don't mind becoming deeper in our relationships, neither do we have a problem when we are called to hang out with the same old crew, but we have a problem when we are called to hang out with the get fresh crew. We have a problem when we are called to go a bit further in our growth process and find out why there is still racism, poverty, classism, illiteracy, and homelessness in our community. We have a problem when it calls for us to dig deeper in our pockets in order that someone has food on the table, clothes on their backs, and money enough to get a quality education.

Going further means that we go a great distance in making the lives of people that much better. In Acts 2:44-45, it says that the people lived in harmony and they had all things in common. Let me see if I can put it to you another way, in an authentic community such as described in Acts 2, they connected with each other and they were willing to do what it took to make the lives of those around them a better place because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. When we come together on one accord and share what we have then our relationships with Christ and each other grows further. What do we have in common with our brothers and sisters? Are we willing to go that extra mile so that someone else will be able to experience the love of Jesus Christ through a relationship us?

Further- there are many within our communities that crave relationships and year are challenged to make a connection. They join clubs, they go to social gatherings, and they hang out at the bar and engage in a whole host of activities. But they never become any more than activities. Church for them is seen as one more activity and quite frankly the one thing they feel is that the main difference between all of the other activities and the church is that the other activities don't judge them.

We are going further as a connecting community and the further we go, the better our relationships will become. In an authentic community there is hard work to be put in, but

if done the way in which Christ calls for it to be done then we will live out the authentic community. I invite to be a connecting community by:

- Praying for yourself and developing a deeper connection with Christ and others
- Praying for your church to be open to receiving people as they are and connecting them to Christ.
- Creating an authentic community of hospitality that helps people to grow deeper, wider, and further in their relationships with others
- Connecting in authentic community by seeing persons as God's children even though they are torn, tattered, confused, and weary. Invite them to dinner and a conversation about Jesus and watch the relationship grow.

Creating Authentic Community Pt. 3: The Developing Community

Scriptures: Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:1-12

For those of us who have been around for a minute or two can recall the days when we wanted to see our pictures, we had to wait until the film was developed. Then there were those persons who had the ability to develop their own film in what was called a dark room. It is in this dark room where the photographer takes the time to make sure that the proper lighting is in the room so that the negatives from the film does not get damaged. In developing pictures, there is a process and it is through this process that we receive the finished product.

This morning as we embark upon this third part of the "Creating Authentic Community" sermon series, we will preach on "The Developing Community." To develop means to cause to become gradually fuller, larger, better, or stronger; to develop also means to make progress; to grow or to evolve into something better than you are. Whether we want to admit it or not, we all could stand some developing in our lives. For those of us who seem to have it going on, we could stand to develop some humility so that we might know who we are and whose we are. For those of us who thinks that the world revolves around us and nobody else counts meet to develop some unselfish attitudes and understand that we are all in this thing together and we cannot make it without each other.

In an "authentic community," we must understand that the way in which we are developed spiritually has a lot to say about who we are and how we interact with world and society. A person who has low-self-esteem tends to think that they are nobody and they will never amount to anything, therefore, they feel misused and abused by any and everybody. The person that develops a mind that says I can walk over you or say to you whatever I want because I have more authority or clout than you have developed in their minds that you of no worth and they are so much better than you.

Even as we look at our world and our nation, we have developed an attitude and a people that thinks and believes that they are God and they control everything. It is a sad thing when people can buy and arm themselves with AR-15's and go into a school or work

place and decide because I have been wronged that no one is allowed to live. We have developed a people with a mindset that says that life is not worth living, and other lives don't matter. Even in our families we have taken on an attitude that we don't need each other. In an "authentic community," productive persons are being developed to impact the world and all lives matter.

In the developing community, there is respect for God and one another, and the house of God. There is something wrong when persons can take the lives of people in a Bible Study or worship time and think that it is okay. In the developing community we are called to produce dynamic disciples. Dynamic disciples are those persons who don't mind sharing what they have with others, and they are willing to develop others so that more disciples are made.

As we move closer to "Creating Authentic Community," we must begin by developing a community that has a mindset that believes that we are more than conquerors, and we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength. In the developing community, not only must our mindsets be on one accord, but we must have the heart of God and commit ourselves to the work of ministry. In this "authentic community," every child belongs to every one of us and we cannot afford to let society raise our children while we sit back and sip our Margaritas. In an "authentic community," we will have to sacrifice some time and effort to make sure that we are living and loving the way in which God has mandated, and that we are productive in our efforts to include everyone in the community.

The Apostle Paul puts it like this in Romans 12:1-2 from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." In developing authentic community, we must use ourselves as living sacrifices that are pleasing to God which is our reasonable worship or service. The blessings that God has given unto us must be used for the glory of God. We are called to develop persons into mature Christians that embraces the love of Jesus Christ. In an "authentic community," we must place our values and thoughts on the things of God.

If we are going to grow in the things of God, then we are going to have to renew our minds. We are going to have to change the way in which we think about God's business. Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:1-5 from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, "If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put

yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.”

In the developing community, we are called to take on the characteristics and attributes of God and live and love each other as God loved us through his only begotten Son Jesus the Christ. In creating authentic community, the developing community produces dynamic disciples who are citizens of the Kingdom of God. In this community, we forget about ourselves and we concentrate on God as God helps us to touch the lives of someone else. As we develop each other, there is something that we must be intentional about in this “authentic community” and that is to reach back and develop someone else that may be less fortunate than us.

There are so many of us that have the potential to be great, but there are others among us who struggle to develop the skills necessary to reach the top. Our tasks as the “authentic community” is to nurture them in the things of God so that God gets the glory out of their lives. And you may be sitting here wondering how in the world can we be the developing community that reaches the masses. Well I am so glad you asked because I have a biblical answer for you on today. One of the things that we have gotten away from are the principles found in the Word of God. The Word of God is a light unto our path, and a lamp unto our feet. It is the one tool necessary for developing our character and integrity. Therefore, we cannot pick it up when we need it and lay it aside when we think we don't.

Luke reminds us in Acts 2:42 & 46 that the community did the following, “They committed themselves to the apostle's teachings, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God.” Our development must begin with the spiritual disciplines so that dynamic disciples are developed for Jesus Christ. As I close and take my seat, let me just give you some disciplines that we as the body of Christ can develop as we create authentic community. In Acts it states that they committed themselves to the teachings of the apostles; life together; common meal and prayer. When we assemble ourselves, we must come with the intent of learning from the LORD, and the only way we can learn is that we hear from the preacher and the only way the preacher can preach is that he or she is sent from God.

Let me see if I can put another way for you, for authentic community to be developed, we must commit ourselves to a daily time of study and prayer; individual and corporate worship; private and corporate bible study, and private and corporate prayer. Our development is dependent upon the way in which we approach these spiritual disciplines. Other spiritual disciplines such as fasting, and prayer must be on the agenda. As we have

approached this Lenten season, we may not have given up anything, but we should commit ourselves as a community to fasting and prayer for our schools, community, church, families and our nation. At least once a week we as the body of Christ should turn our plates down and seek the face of God. The developing community is that community that sacrifices for the good of the people and to lift God. The developing community is that authentic community where there is common unity amongst the people and we work the ministry of God with glad and cheerful hearts.

Just as I spoke earlier in this sermon about photography and how pictures were developed years ago, we must understand that we must spend some time in the dark room with Jesus as our light so that we can develop a beautiful picture where everybody is welcomed.

Amen.

Creating Authentic Community Pt. 4: The Serving Community

Scriptures: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

Whatever is done for God, without respect of its comparative character as related to other acts, is service, and only that is service. Service I, comprehensively speaking, doing the will of God. God is the object, and everything we do is for the glory of God. In our service, we are not necessarily concerned about what we get out of the deal, but we are concentrating on the fact that God is glorified. Therefore, even the humblest act of the humblest disciple acquires a certain divine quality by its being done with reference to God. The supreme test of service is this: "For whom am I doing this?" Much of what we call service to Christ is not such at all—if we are doing this for Christ, we shall not care for human reward or even recognition. Our work must again be tested by three propositions: Is it work from God, as given us to do from God; for God, as finding in God its secret of power; and with God, as only a part of God's work in which we engage as co-workers with God."

As we approach this fourth part of the sermon series, we are called to be "The Serving Community." We are willing to worship God as community; connect with each other as community; and even develop each other through God in community. But this fourth thing for some of us is seemingly a hard thing to do. We don't mind giving our money to help a cause, because when we give we feel that we are serving the betterment of the community by our giving and God is pleased with our service. Now don't get me wrong we need finances to make sure that many of our service projects and ministries move forward. The thing that we must understand about the devil is that he doesn't mind us having powerful worship; the devil doesn't mind if we learn the Word of God; but the one thing that the devil does not want us to do is to take what we have learned and use it in service to the Lord.

The devil does not want us to come together on one accord and fight injustices and ills that plague our world, nation, or society. The devil gets scared when we ban together to make sure that there is affordable housing, health care for everyone, necessities of life given to each human being. When we come together and serve the Lord with everything

that we have and begin to solve many of our issues in the world, and not place a band-aid over them then we will truly understand and know what it means to serve. **The word serve means to work for somebody; to be of use to somebody; to render service to; to answer the purpose; and to render assistance.** The service that we provide God's creation should not be about us and what we want, but it should be about how we can better serve creation and at the same time build up the Kingdom of God.

Dr. King reminds us in his book *Strength to Love*, in the sermon entitled *On Being a Good Neighbor* that our service counts for something. The lawyer in Luke 10:39 wanted to know how to receive eternal life, and Jesus asks him what does the law say. The lawyer states that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and our neighbors as we do ourselves. And then the lawyer seeks to ask Jesus this question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus then begins to talk about the Jericho road and how a man was left for dead and the Levite and the Priest passed by, but the Samaritan stopped to help out. Dr. King states it this way about the Samaritan, "He is altruistic? Altruism is 'regard for, and devotion to, the interest of others.'" The Samaritan was good because he made sure that in his life that he cared for others.

In an authentic community we must understand that our work for Jesus Christ is not finished if we have not made a positive impact on the people we serve. We must understand that God is not looking for how we can quote the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, nor is God looking for our status in life, but God is looking for how effective you are as the Church in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison, caring for the sick, and giving water to those who are thirsty. God wants to know how we are caring for the poor and oppressed in the world. Matthew 25:34-40 reminds us that when we have done it to the least of these, we have done it unto God.

As an authentic community our service to God and God's people cannot be done on a pick and choose basis. Where we are there are sick, hungry, imprisoned, and wayward people in our community and there are many things that could have led them in this direction. The service that we render to our community and our church should move us to make a difference in the lives that we live and others. Prayer, Bible Study, church school, baptism, Holy Communion, and all of those things are good and important to our development as disciples, but if we are not being moved to serve the community in an authentic way, then we must rethink our approach to living the life of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul helps us to understand in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 that all of what we have comes from the Spirit of God. The spiritual gifts that we possess in the body of Christ helps us to minister one to the other and to the needs of others. All of us according to 1 Corinthians 12 have different gifts, and every gift is beneficial to the body. We must understand that in an authentic community that our gifts should work together to build a stronger community. None of us think the same way; act the same way; nor do we carry out our service in ministry the same way. We ought to give God thanks and praise that we are different, because that is what makes the "authentic community" special. Different means that we uniquely created by God and God has equipped us with the gifts we have to complement one another.

The thing that was happening in the Corinthian church was the spiritual gifts were splitting the church instead of building it up. The gifts had become symbols of spiritual power, therefore, causing rivalries and setting up hierarchies of spiritual and unspiritual people. This had become a problem because the spiritual gifts were to build up and edify the church and not divide it. Let me see if I can help you out in this way, it does not matter how gifted you are or how anointed you are, if you are using your gifts for selfish gain, or your gifts seem to be dividing the church then there is a problem and you need to submit yourself before God in order that we are on one accord.

Paul picked this gift thing up and took it a little further in Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians. Paul said that even though we can speak eloquently; we have knowledge of all prophecy and mysteries but have not the love of God then we are nothing, no more than a clanging cymbal and a tinkling gong. James reminds us in the 2nd chapter and verses 14-17, that our faith without works is dead. James lets us know that we cannot continue to preach Jesus to those who are hungry and looking for some food and shelter. In an “authentic community,” we are called to feed the people and satisfy their physical nature and then we have an opportunity to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Zan Holmes reminds us in his book *Encountering Jesus* of what faith and service is all about. Dr. Holmes states, “More important, when faith tries to live without works, it is not just faith that dies; it is the poor and oppressed who also dies.” In other words, faith and works must go hand in hand.

The serving community in an “authentic community” is done individually, but we as a collective unit, we can help in serving and solving many of the issues in the community. The question that I want to ask this morning is this, “Are we seeking to do charity, or are we seeking to raise justice issues?” I believe that the church has a hard time distinguishing between doing charity and seeking out justice. If we were to sit down and look at the two closely, we would find out that charity and justice is not the same. Charity is essentially a temporary provision. It provides temporary relief to the problem; while on the other hand justice gets to the root causes of the problems we face. We are still faced with injustices in this year of 2018 and as the church we must position ourselves to serving the community so that ills and injustices are eradicated. Racism, segregation, and discrimination are still alive and well in our world and society, the only thing that has happened is that it is dressed up in different clothes.

In Acts 2:44-45, it states that “***the people met together constantly and shared everything that they had, selling their possessions and dividing with those in need.***” Go with me for a moment and just imagine if we gave up two to three outside lunches a week and bring those funds to the church for missions and service to the church and world. I want us to take a challenge with me during this Lenten Season and sacrifice the two to three lunches or lattes that we drink and bring the money to the church for missions in the church and community abroad. There are persons in our midst that cannot pay the rent, buy medicine, or get food on their income. As the body of Christ, we should be in the position to help others who are in need. We will have to reposition ourselves to become the head and not the tail; the lender and not the borrower.

Even as we move forward to “Creating Authentic Community,” and being the serving community, we all have the capacity to serve God and others in a powerful way. There is some child that is on the brink of quitting school and they think that no one cares; that mother, father, grandmother, grandfather is struggling to make ends meet and are wondering how they are going to make it. An “authentic community” is a serving community who cares about God’s creation and makes a way for the blessings of God to be poured out. Jesus said it best when he said these words, “I did not come to be served, but to serve.”

The song writer put it best when these words were penned: “If I can help somebody, as I pass along. If I can cheer somebody with a word or a song. If I can show somebody, he is traveling wrong, then my living shall not be in vain. Then my living shall not be in vain—then my living shall not be in vain. If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain. If I can do my duty, as a Christian ought. If I can bring salvation to a world once wrought. If I can spread love’s message as the Master taught, then my living shall not be in vain.”

Where is God calling you to serve? Remember God didn’t save us to sit, but God saved us to serve. Amen.

Creating Authentic Community Pt. 5: The Contagious Community
Scriptures Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 28:16-20

Here we are at the last Sunday of this Sermon Series entitled “Creating Authentic Community,” and I pray that you have been blessed by this series and that God has touched you in some way to help strengthen “authentic community.” Over the last few weeks we have learned how to worship and how are to come together so that our worship might have some meaning and understanding. The second week we learned that unless we connect with others and God, then we will never experience “authentic community.” We learned that in our connections, there is nothing that can tear us apart as long as we are connected in Jesus’ name.

The third week we came to understand that we need to develop ourselves as dynamic disciples. We learned that dynamic disciples have no problem sharing the Word of God with anyone, and they do it because they love the Lord and they want to see the Kingdom of God grow. Last week we learned that even though we have meaningful worship; we connect with each other and God; and we develop persons through Bible Study, small groups, and church school, if we are not reaching the least, the last, and the lost, then the Kingdom of God is not being furthered. In other words, we are just spinning our wheels in the mud.

Therefore, as we bring this series to a close, I want us to understand as the body of Christ and especially as the Huntingtown Charge that we need to become a “contagious community.” We need to begin as the body of Christ to share with others the goodness of the Lord. We need to be that “contagious community” that infects people with our germs

so that they may come to know the power of Jesus Christ in their lives. It often boggles my mind of how we can share the good gossip with other church folk, but we cannot share the gospel with those who are lost and looking for the love of God.

We must understand that there are people in the world, but not only in the world; they are sitting next to you in the pew that is lost. That is right; there are persons in this church who are lost. Even though they come every week and sit through the worship service, they are lost, and they are looking for some real, authentic, genuine people to share the love of Jesus Christ with them. We cannot become so selfish with the blessings that God has given us, because if we are not careful God will take them from us. We must be willing to share our life story with somebody else so that they might realize there is hope.

As we close this series, we must understand that we cannot truly become an “authentic community,” we need the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and ministry. As in the book of Joel and Acts, the Holy Spirit fell on the people and the people were changed to become disciples of Jesus Christ. We must understand that the Holy Spirit did not fall on a building, the Holy Spirit fell on a group of people and that group of people began to experience signs and wonders from God. Let me ask you this question this morning, “What signs and what” wonders have you seen in your life lately?” When was the last time you had an encounter with the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit fell on the people on the Day of Pentecost and it was not a time for us to get our shout on; neither was it a time for us to think that the Spirit fell and that was all to it. The book of Acts written by Luke tells us that the followers of Jesus Christ and how they were led by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. Acts is a theological book with lessons and living examples of the work of the Holy Spirit, the church relationships, and organizations, the implications of grace, and the law of love. The most important feature of the book of Acts is the movement of the Holy Spirit which comes with power upon believers on the day of Pentecost to guide and strengthen the church and its leaders.

Huntingtown Charge it is time for us to share the love of Jesus Christ with those who are in our midst. It is time for us to come together on one accord, be in one place, and wait for the power of the Holy Spirit to become contagious in our lives. I am crazy enough to believe that if we become a “contagious community,” if we decide to tell our story about how God has impacted our life then God will begin to add daily to our numbers. In verse 43 of Acts 2, Luke tells us that in a “authentic community,” the following things happen; 1) persons are baptized and added to the body of Christ as member of Christ’s holy church; 2) the church places themselves under the teachings of the pastor or apostles and they begin to develop themselves as disciples; 3) because they feared God, many signs and wonders were done through the apostle’s and they began to have all things in common, and they celebrated the love of Jesus Christ with everyone.

What happens when we begin to share our germs with other people? The other person becomes sick with the same thing that we have, and if they spread it to someone else, they too become sick and so on. In the case of a physical sickness, we go to the doctor’s

and they give us medicine in order that we might get rid of the germs. We don't want to be sick in our bodies because it brings us down. Well I have come by to let you know something this morning. There are not enough of us sick in the body of Christ. I know you are sitting there trying to figure out what I am talking about. Not enough of us are spreading the infectious power of God with other people; therefore, we are not seeing the results that we need to see in the body of Christ.

There are too many of us taking our quiet medicine, and nobody seems to know that we love Jesus and there is power in that name. Joel and Luke tell us that ***“in the last days, God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on my menservants and my maidservants I will pour out my Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.”*** Luke goes in those verses and tells us that this who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

When the Holy Spirit comes then we will become that “contagious community” that witnesses the power of Jesus Christ. In our Old Testament lesson this morning we find God sending Ezekiel down to the valley of dry bones. And God asks Ezekiel this one significant question, and the question is “Can these bones live.” God then tells Ezekiel to speak to four winds, prophesy to the wind and things will begin to happen. So, Ezekiel prophesied to the wind and the wind began to make a rattling noise in the valley. All of a sudden, the bones got together on one accord, flesh and muscles formed on the bones and once again that which was dead became alive because of the moving of the Holy Spirit in the valley.

Let me break it down to you like this, when the Holy Spirit comes it will begin to speak to the dry and dead places in our lives. As an “authentic community” when the Holy Spirit come we begin to feel the power of a fresh wind and all of a sudden thing will come together on one accord and life will be new again. Jesus promised us that we would have life and live that life in abundance or fullness, but it would be the Holy Spirit that would operate in us.

The second thing that happened in this passage is that they saw tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person. John the Baptist told us that he would baptize with water, but the Holy Spirit would baptize you with fire. You may be wondering why tongues of fire? Tongues symbolize speech and the communication of the gospel. Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, burning away undesirable elements of our lives and setting our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others. On Mount Sinai God confirmed the validity of the Old Testament law with fire from heaven (Ex. 19:16-18). At Pentecost God confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit's ministry by sending fire. At Mount Sinai fire came down on one place; at Pentecost fire came down on many believers symbolizing God's presence is now available to all who believe. God's presence was known to this group of believers in a spectacular way—rushing wind, fire, and the Holy Spirit.

When share the power of God with others, then the Spirit will show up in their lives. The Holy Spirit is not some magic potion that God lets go from heaven that will make you shout and dance and tear up the church when the music starts, or when your favorite song is sung, or when the pastor says something that tickles your ear. The Holy Spirit dwells deep in our hearts and souls. In Revelation 1:10, when the Holy Spirit came upon John on the Isle of Patmos, he said, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet which was the Lord’s voice and the Holy Spirit came upon him.”

This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving John a vision—showing him situations and events he could not see with mere human eyesight. If we could just stand still and listen to the voice of God in our lives, then the Holy Spirit will come and minister to us with fire that will burn deep on our hearts and our souls. If we would just stand still and see the salvation of God and hear from heaven, then we would not have a whole lot of murmuring and complaining about the ministry of God.

The Bible says that from 120, that 3,000 people were added daily to the church. What would it look like if we were to add 3,000 people to our church on a daily basis? Why is it that we often times limit what God can do in our lives? Why is it that we can never get over getting surprised by God? Why don’t we plan for days when we have 3,000 in worship service; I will shout when everybody decides that it is not about them and we come together on one accord to do ministry in Jesus name, and we get the 167 that we have on roll? Why don’t we plan Sunday after Sunday for the Holy Spirit to just break into our worship experience and have his way and we move out the way? That’s what it means to be Pentecostal.

It’s not the style of worship. It’s the authenticity of the Holy Spirit that I’m going to allow God to come in and take charge. Pentecostal is not a way of worshiping nor is it a denomination, but it is a way of living your life open and available. When the Holy Spirit comes He will make you talk right, walk right, live right, pray right, preach right, and He will give you power to withstand the fiery darts of the devil. When the Holy Spirit comes He makes you a brand-new creation, you are able to stand boldly and witness in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Matthew the 28th chapter and the 18-20th verses Jesus tells us that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth; therefore, we are not to sit in our comfortable church pews, but we are making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are to teach them everything that the Lord has taught us. Let me see if I can help you out this morning, folk are not going to stop by this house of God because we are here. We are going to have to “sneeze on somebody” in the Starbucks, the Mall, or even in the bar and begin to fellowship there with the word of God. I am not looking for thousands upon thousands of people to come to this branch of Zion, but I am looking for the ones who are here to “sneeze on somebody” in order that fellowship is happening where you live. “Sneeze on somebody,” and see if they won’t catch what you have. Amen.

APPENDIX C

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY SURVEY MONKEY

Creating Authentic Community

Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the "Creating Authentic Community" Sermon Series and Bible Study

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



2. I received the information needed to help me become a part of an "Authentic Community."

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



3. I have a good understanding of what it means to be "Authentic" as it relates to community

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



4. From the sermons and bible study, I feel that the Huntington Charge is fulfilling the mission and vision of an "Authentic Community."

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



5. I am provided opportunities to live in "Authentic Community" on the Huntington Charge.

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



6. Through the Sermon Series and Bible Study, I understand the process it takes to be in "Authentic Community."

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



7. I believe that our mission and vision will be the driving force for the Huntingtown Charge becoming an "Authentic Community."

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



8. The Sermon Series and Bible Study has provided opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership.

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



9. I intend to continue my quest of "Creating Authentic Community" on the Huntingtown Charge.

Strongly Disagree



Slightly Disagree



Disagree



Slightly Agree



Agree



Strongly Agree



j_l_3D&...

10. Name three ways in which we can enhance our "Authentic Community?"

APPENDIX D

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY SERMON SERIES AND BIBLE STUDY SURVEY (HARD COPY)

Creating Authentic Community

Creating Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality in a Multi-Point Church

Please return by March 25, 2018 to Joyce Freeland, Ginny Beauchamp, Guffrie Smith, or Mona Long

Survey Monkey Link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3VKLLMR>

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality.

Use the rating scale to select the quality number.

Survey Item	Scale				
	Poor	Good		Excellent	
Overall, I am satisfied with the “Creating Authentic Community” Sermon series and Bible Study.	1	2	3	4	5
I received the information needed to become an “Authentic Community.”	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good understanding of what it means to be “Authentic” as it relates to community.	1	2	3	4	5
From the sermons and Bible Study, I feel that the Huntingtown Charge is fulfilling the mission and vision of an “Authentic Community.”	1	2	3	4	5
I am provided opportunities to live in “Authentic Community” on the Huntingtown Charge.	1	2	3	4	5
Through the Sermon series and Bible Study, I understand the process it takes to be in “Authentic Community.”	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that our mission and vision will be the driving force to becoming an “Authentic Community.”	1	2	3	4	5
The sermon series and bible study has provided opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to continue my quest of “Creating Authentic Community” on the Huntingtown Charge.	1	2	3	4	5
Name three ways in which we can enhance our Authentic Community?	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX E

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY DAY SURVEY

The Huntingtown Charge Community Day Evaluation Form

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Please complete and return to the registration table before leaving event

In order for us to evaluate our ministry to the community, we ask that you fill out this evaluation form and return it to the registration table. This evaluation will help us in our quest to Create Authentic Community through Intentional Hospitality.

1. Overall information provided at the Community Day: ☐Excellent ☐Good
☐Fair ☐Poor

Comments:

2. Presenter overall Content: ☐Excellent ☐Good ☐Fair ☐Poor

Comments:

3. Was the program presentation beneficial to you? ☐Yes ☐No

Comments:

4. Did you receive the information you expected? ☐Yes ☐No

Comments:

5. Was sufficient time provided for the presentation? ☐Yes ☐No

Comments:

6. Meeting Site: ☐Excellent ☐Good ☐Fair ☐Poor

Comments:

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PRESENTATION TOPICS

8. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE MEETING LOCATIONS

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